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# THE LOUISIANA<sup>194</sup> HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Vol. 23, No. 1

JANUARY, 1948

The Origin and Early Settlement of Baton Rouge, Louisiana,  
by Andrew C. Allen.

The French Church Catechism in Historical Writings, by Hilbert  
O'Reilly Stearns.

A History of the English Theatre at New Orleans, 1800-1850,  
by Ralph Bunker.

Louisiana's Administration of Swamp Land Funds, by Sam  
Wells.

The Santa Fe Trail in The Cathedral Square in New Orleans,  
by Ralph Bunker.

Ralph Bunker.

Published Quarterly by

THE LOUISIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

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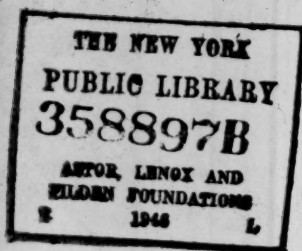
Vol 28, No. 1

JANUARY, 1945



Entered as Second Class mail matter June 6, 1917, at the post office at New Orleans, La.,  
under Act of August 24, 1912.

Subscription \$3.00 per annum, payable in advance. Address Louisiana Historical Quarterly,  
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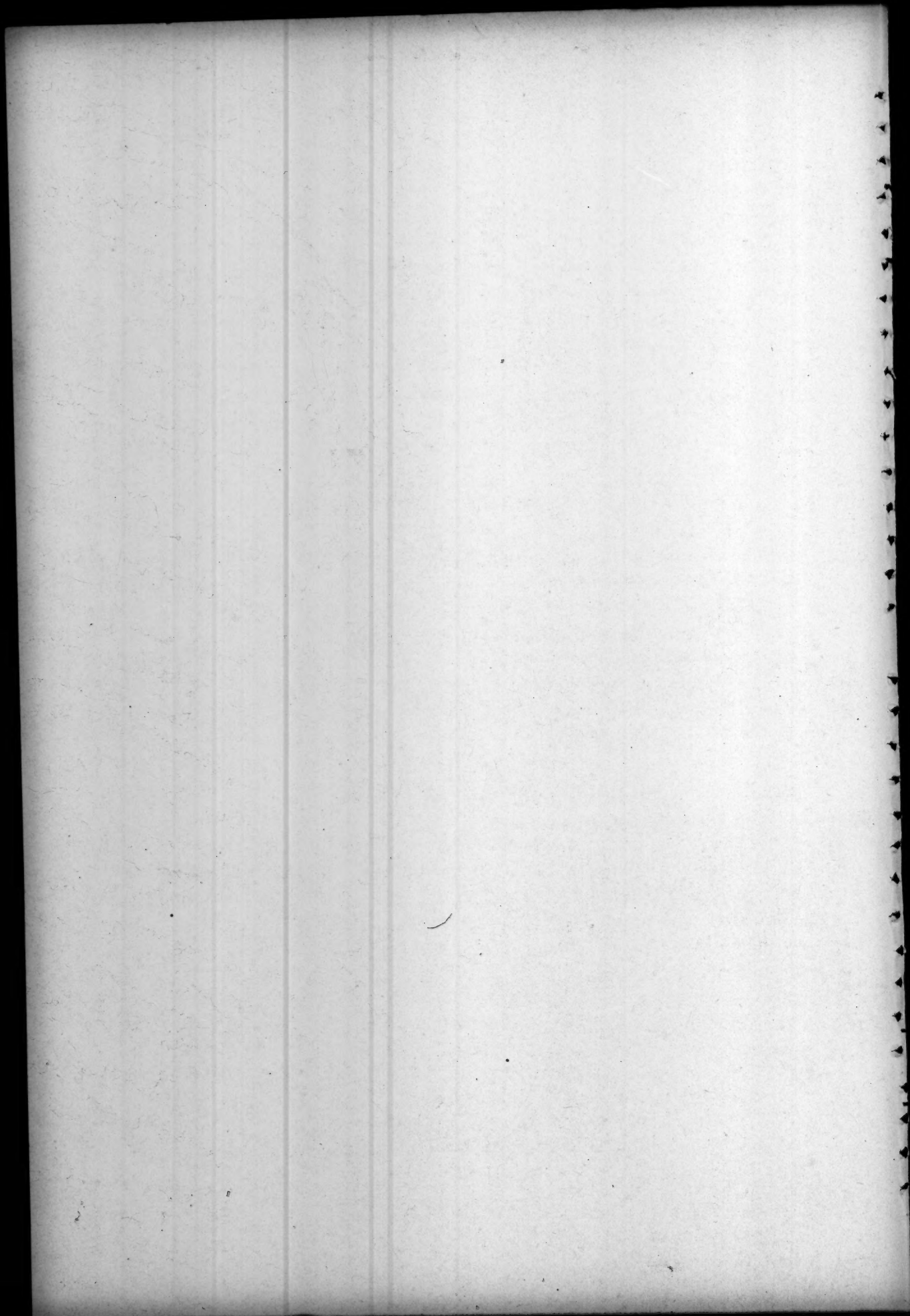
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# THE LOUISIANA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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## THE ORIGIN AND EARLY SETTLEMENT OF BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

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*By* ANDREW C. ALBRECHT

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### INTRODUCTION

Baton Rouge is the French name given to what is now the capital city of the State of Louisiana, a growing metropolis situated on the east bank of the Lower Mississippi River in the southern-central section of the State. It is also applied to a small bayou which to the north of the city winds its way through a low section known as Devils Swamp. Furthermore, it is perpetuated by the designations given to two political subdivisions of the State, East and West Baton Rouge Parishes, lying on either side of the Mississippi in the same general area. In a typical manner of Louisiana name-giving, then, it was bestowed upon a settlement, a bayou, and two parishes.

Like many other Louisiana place-names of the same origin, it recalls at once the exploration and colonization of the Lower Mississippi Valley by the French. Its earliest application, in fact, dates back to March 17, 1699, when the site was first explored by Iberville and his men. Originally, therefore, it was applied to the locality itself.

Its ultimate source, however, is Indian. When the French explorers first appeared on the scene, the place was already occupied by a group of historic Indians, the Houma, who had given it the name Istrouma which, like the French designation, signifies "red stick". Many speculations have been made as to the exact spelling of this aboriginal name, but authoritative references to its origin and meaning are not lacking. Indeed, shortly

after the discovery of the place, the French designation was declared to be a simple translation of the original Indian name.<sup>1</sup>

The origin of the present city, therefore, cannot be dissociated from the Indians who had already given the place a name which has exactly the same meaning. Neither can it be divorced from the specific events that led to the application of the original Indian name. The name Istrouma has indeed been revived by tradition-loving Baton Rougeans to designate a modern suburb lying immediately to the north of the city, and many local historians have searched ceaselessly for the true story that lies behind the meaning of this name.

While the meaning "red stick" may seem rather odd and uninteresting to some Americans, it assumes a special significance for those who have learned to think of their country in terms of local history. Historians are not surprised to find a town called Red Stick, for they know too well that the New World is sprinkled not only with classical and highly romantic place-names, but also with many that are plain and ordinary. In fact, there is another place in the United States, that of Painted Post in New York State, which shares a similar name and almost the same fate in receiving it.<sup>2</sup> The name Baton Rouge, in other words, falls readily into a pattern that is rich in human and historical associations.

Baton Rougeans themselves are generally aware of the curious meaning that is attached to the name of their city. They do not mind its mater-of-fact connotation, because their traditions are sufficiently alive to apply the name more meaningfully. Besides, they regard their much-loved home town with the same characteristic feeling of those who reside permanently in a given place, that is, they have a devoted attachment to it. One's home town, after all, is not a mere geographical fact, it is also a psychological one.

Just what psychological hold the place has had upon its past inhabitants is difficult to tell, but it is certain that the name itself must have greatly pleased them. The French terms have never been permanently replaced; neither have they been corrupted by that capriciousness of folk-etymology which so often deprives

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Margry (ed.), *Découvertes et Établissements des Français dans L'Ouest et dans le Sud de L'Amérique Septentrionale, 1614-1754* (6 Vols., Paris, 1879-1888); V, 395.

<sup>2</sup> Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of New York (comp.), *New York: A Guide to the Empire State* (American Guide Series: New York, 1940), 390.

an old name entirely of its meaning. Even during the transition from French into Spanish and finally into English they have retained their original form and meaning. The only dissimilation that has taken place is with regard to their pronunciation. While the term *rouge* is still articulated in accordance with French speech habits, the word *baton* is now pronounced in the simple manner of everyday American-English.

In explaining the survival of the name the assumption is frequently made that the French terms are more pleasing to the ear. It is a well-known fact, however, that euphonic tastes are culturally conditioned and that they have only a relatively small survival value in the history of place-names. Legends and traditions are much more important, and a name that bears witness to some historic event or the existence of a particular landmark has a more enduring folk-character. This seems to be true particularly in the case of Baton Rouge, for the name definitely suggests a cultural or geographical landmark. The landmark, to be sure, is no longer in existence, and the men who first saw it have long departed; but the legend of it still endures, and the place is still known as that of the Red Stick.

Historians, unfortunately, have not yet been able to determine the exact nature and purpose of the famous red stick; neither have they been able to locate the site where it stood. Many conjectures, therefore, have been made about its existence. As will be explained later, there are two clear-cut theories, however, which stand out: (a) a so-called "pole theory" which claims that the landmark in question was a reddened pole erected by the Indians as a boundary mark; (b) a "tree theory" which insists that it was an exceptionally tall cypress tree.

While it is obvious that only one of these theories can be true, both have been cited again and again in the respective literature. Earlier historians have adhered more to the tree theory, but later ones are practically unanimous in supporting that of the pole. Local residents in their own efforts to explain the name of their city, a name which taken by itself seems meaningless, have either followed suit or given up entirely. It is indeed a bit uncomfortable to have a name that engages the interests of every visitor and yet not be able to account for its origin.

There are always some pseudo-historical writers, of course, who manage to simplify matters. Mr. Sparks, to cite only one outstanding example, simply asserts that the city received its name from "the flagstaff which stood in the Spanish fort, and which was painted red".<sup>3</sup>

The problem, obviously, is not as simple as that; it is admittedly a complex one, especially to those who have seriously tried to solve it. Even the pole theory, which is now generally accepted by local historians, should still be held with caution. While it provides the most plausible explanation, it needs further amplification and analysis. For one thing, it neglects to take into account the tribal customs of the Indians who erected the pole. For another, it ignores some pertinent locational factors. These data, from the point of view of historical methodology, should never have been omitted; they should have been included even if they possess little or no explanatory value.

In a study dealing with the origin of Baton Rouge it becomes further imperative that the data pertaining to the early French settlement be reconsidered. Far too many distortions are being made by popular writers in this particular field. In special leaflets, for example, visitors are informed that several historic landmarks of the city, such as the Pentagon Barracks, the Old Arsenal, and the Old City Market, were built "in 1719 under Bienville".<sup>4</sup> Although the information thus offered is entirely erroneous, the reader is assured that it comes from "an official guide who really knows Baton Rouge, its history and tradition, and who interprets them interestingly, intelligently, and truthfully".<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps, Baton Rougeans need not take this erroneously exaggerated antiquity of their historic landmarks too seriously, for the all-important fact remains that certain local groups are quite successful in stirring up a real interest in the early history of the city. A renewed and more active interest in this particular field should indeed be welcomed. Local traditions, after all, are those things of which men are proud everywhere. However, that which gives rise to pride should always spring from a consciousness of real worth, that is, it should be free from falsehood and pretense. Even the most tourist-minded visitor will resent

<sup>3</sup> William Henry Sparks, *The Memories of Fifty Years* (Macon, Ga., 1870), 390.

<sup>4</sup> The Baton Rouge Yellow Cab Company, *Seeing Baton Rouge* (An undated leaflet), sections 1, 3, 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction.

having become the victim of false information. Tradition-loving Baton Rougeans, therefore, should make one point perfectly clear: that they do not wish to condone any dubious identification of their historic landmarks. They should be in accord with those historians who are aware of the saying that "antiquity cannot privilege an error, nor novelty prejudice a truth".<sup>6</sup>

To prevent further distortions with regard to the origin and early settlement of Baton Rouge, a subject matter which all local residents and citizens of Louisiana highly cherish, the present study was initiated by the Anthropology Department of the Louisiana State University. No attempt was made to answer the many questions pertaining to the subsequent history of the settlement, for this particular subject matter belongs in the realm of the historian. The chief emphasis was placed upon the Indian occupancy of the place and the locational factors involved in the French exploration of the Indian site. Physiographic factors were dealt with at great length for the obvious reason that they are helpful in comprehending the natural setting of the place at the time of its discovery by the French and in evaluating the opportunities which the region did afford then for human settlement.

Most of the information set forth in the present paper is derived from official documents and maps that have already been utilized by ethno-historians. These sources have been carefully scrutinized, however, and some new information, perhaps the most important, was collected from early land descriptions that are contained in the old British and Spanish land grants. The paper itself is not intended to be an exhaustive treatise. Its sole purpose is to make a logical beginning in the study of the origin of Baton Rouge and, thus, provide a basic reference tool for further research.

#### THE GENERAL SETTING OF THE PLACE

Baton Rouge lies in the southern-central section of Louisiana, about 80 miles northwest of the city of New Orleans. The site on which the city and its suburbs are built forms the westernmost portion of East Baton Rouge Parish and contains approximately 30 square miles of territory. A more important locational factor is the immediate position on the east bank of the Missis-

<sup>6</sup> Dent Smith (ed.), "Proverbs and Other Sayings Collected by Thomas Fuller, 1654-1734," in *Encore*, V, No. 29 (June, 1944), p. 682.

issippi River. Still more important is the fact that the site is located on high ground, the first highlands above the Gulf of Mexico.

Together with the river, the uplands constitute the most outstanding physiographic feature of the place. They are separated from the bank of the river by a series of so-called "bluffs" which rise abruptly and, thus, protect the site against devastating inundations. Geologically, the Baton Rouge bluff-locality forms a portion of an old alluvial terrace which came into existence during late Pleistocene times.<sup>7</sup> In other words, it is at least several thousand years old.

The average elevation near the center of the site is about 40 feet, but several miles south of the city where the high ground begins the land rises only a few feet above the floodplain. The local relief gradually increases northward, reaching an altitude of more than 100 feet near the present Louisiana-Mississippi State boundary. In the northern section of the State, therefore, the bluffs are much more prominent. The uplands in the Baton Rouge area have a special significance, however, because it is here where they begin and where they are first encountered by upstream travelers.

Another prominent feature of the landscape is the straight course followed by the Mississippi in this particular area. Known as the Baton Rouge Reach, it is about 8 miles long and, as measured from Cairo, Illinois, lies between river miles 837 and 845. Its origin is closely connected with an ancient cut-off which occurred in the complicated meander area lying to the north of river mile 837. The time when this cut-off took place has not yet been determined by hydrographic experts, but it is certain that the Reach itself has been in existence in its present shape hundreds of years before the coming of the white man. It is also known that there have been no shifts in its position during the last three hundred years.<sup>8</sup>

While the present metropolitan center lies near the middle of the Reach, the combined city and suburban areas extend along its entire length. As a distinct physiographic unit, then, the Baton Rouge area may be said to include all the lands lying along the east

<sup>7</sup> Harold N. Fisk, "Pleistocene Exposures in Western Florida Parishes, Louisiana," in *Contributions to the Pleistocene History of the Florida Parishes of Louisiana* (Department of Conservation, Louisiana Geological Survey: New Orleans, September, 1938), 6-16, *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> Harold N. Fisk, *Geological Report to the Mississippi River Commission on the Baton Rouge Underseepage Area* (Baton Rouge: July 1942), Introduction.

A hand-drawn map of the Manchac River and its tributaries. The map shows the Manchac River flowing from the top right towards the bottom center, where it meets the Bayou. Major tributaries include the Amite River, the Comite River, the Hurricane Creek, the Wolf Creek, the Sugar Creek, the Bayou Supplient, and the Bayou Fountain. Other features include the Devil's Swamp, Lake Korman, and various smaller creeks like the Wolf Creek and Sugar Creek. The map is labeled with 'Manchac' at the bottom right, 'Bayou' at the bottom center, and 'Amite River' on the right. A scale bar is at the bottom, and a dashed line indicates a boundary at the top.

*Simplified Sketch Map of the East Baton Rouge Parish Area; showing the general drainage system, the bluffline, and the river mileage of the Mississippi.*

bank of the Reach. In other words, two arbitrary lines drawn eastward from river miles 837 and 845 would constitute its north-south territorial limits, while the river itself provides a western boundary. To the east, the Comite and Amite Rivers may be taken as the furthest extension; but these rivers, unlike the Mississippi which follows a straight north-south course, are directed toward the southeast.<sup>9</sup> The areal extent of the unit in question, therefore, increases considerably toward the east; it is approximately 150 square miles, or about one third of that contained by the entire parish.

The surface of the land forms a gently south-eastward sloping plain. This all-important physiographic fact is clearly reflected by the courses that are followed by the tributaries of the Comite and Amite Rivers, such as Cypress Bayou, Hurricane Creek, Jones Creek, Bayou Duplantier, Dawson Creek, Ward Creek, and Bayou Fountain.<sup>10</sup> Yet, there are some irregularities in the surface of the land which interfere considerably with the general drainage pattern. They are chiefly the result of several gaps that have been in existence in the blufflands ever since late Pleistocene times. The surface of these gap areas, unlike that of the area as a whole, slopes toward the west. Hence, there are several small bodies of water, such as Bayou Garcie, Bayou Monte Sano, and Lake Kernan, that find their outlet into the Mississippi.<sup>11</sup>

Another factor which interferes with the general drainage of the area is the highly irregular line of water parting. In some sections this line is much closer to the bluffline than in others. This is true particularly south of the city where the uplands have but a slight elevation. Here, the divide is so indistinct that the backwaters of the south-eastward flowing streams actually reach the Mississippi during periods of heavy rains. In this section, moreover, the Mississippi itself contributes a certain amount of flood water; for it is here where the river trends away from the bluffline, leaving a regular floodplain between its banks and the uplands.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> U. S. War Department, Corps of Engineers, *Louisiana: Baton Rouge Quadrangle, and Zachary Quadrangle* (Mississippi River Commission, 1939). See also "Simplified Sketch Map" of area, Plate I, herein.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>11</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>12</sup> Fisk, *Geological Report to the Mississippi River Commission on the Baton Rouge Underseepage Area*, Introduction, *passim*.

It is not surprising, therefore, to hear of the former existence of large areas of swamp lands. The presence of such swamps is reported above all by General Collot, who in 1796 made a military survey of the Spanish post at Baton Rouge. Describing the site on which the fort stood, this former French officer states that it is:

bounded behind at six hundred yards distance, by a vast grove of cypress trees D, in which there are from ten to twelve feet of water in the season of inundations, but which in dry weather, forms an impracticable morass.<sup>13</sup>

Collot also mentions a large cypress swamp lying to the north of the fort. On the other hand, the surface on which the fort stood is described by him as "a perfect planimetre, uninterrupted either by woods, defiles, or any undulation whatever." To the south of the fort, the land is said to have ended "by a gentle slope in a cultivated plain C." A small creek and a little rivulet are reported to have found their outlet into the Mississippi.<sup>14</sup>

These early physiographic data lack the specific details that are necessary to make positive identifications, but they provide a fairly accurate picture of the landscape before it was extensively altered by the builders of the present city. There is no doubt that the Baton Rouge bluff-locality was at that time a semi-wooded plain interrupted here and there by low swampy grounds. Traces of this original surface configuration can still be discerned within the present metropolitan center, although most of the swampy grounds have been drained. Bayou Garcie and Bayou Monte Sano, for example, are still two important streams that find their way into the Mississippi. A number of artificial lakes, moreover, such as Old University Lake, City Park Lake, and New University Lake, betray their origin from large swampy grounds. Many aged residents, in fact, remember the days when large sections of the city were filled in for building purposes.<sup>15</sup>

The former unevenness of the surface is also reflected by the particular names given to the various subdivisions of the city. Few things perhaps are more revealing of the original surface configuration than these names. While the names them-

<sup>13</sup> Victory Collot, *A Journey in North America* (Paris, 1826), p. 76 and plates 25, 35.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> Data obtained personally from more than a score of local residents.

selves seem to give evidence only of the lively imagination on the part of the past inhabitants of the city, they undoubtedly suggest the former existence of slight elevations. The places in question are:

Standard Heights		Baton Rouge Terrace		University Hills	
Scotland	"	Louisiana	"	Colonial	"
Capital	"	Kleinert	"	College	"
McGrath	"	Bernard	"	Park	"
Smiley	"	Roseland	"	North Highlands	
Sunset	"	Highland	"	Kleinert	"

Although not one of them is really high enough to deserve its descriptive name, the elevation of many is still sufficiently prominent to be noticeable.<sup>16</sup>

Today, there is little left of the original land surface that has not been altered by man. This is true particularly of the section close to the bluffline where the modern industrial city has been built. To the north there is still a partially wooded plain, stretching toward the Scott Bluffs. Eastward are the many farmlands, pastures, and semi-wooded areas that extend to the Comite and Amite Rivers. To the south a large terrace stands out on which the Louisiana State University is located, and beyond this terrace low cypress swamps mark the beginning of the deltaic floodplain. Westward, finally, a vast panorama unfolds, extending up and down the Mississippi and across toward the vast level expanse on the west bank of the river.

An over-all picture of the present-day landscape also reveals the existence of so-called "levees" along the immediate water front. These embankments were obviously erected to alleviate flood evils. There are no specific data on the first construction of a riverside levee in this area, but from an old plan dating back to the year 1811 it is evident that such a levee was already in existence then.<sup>17</sup> The fact that east bank levees extended all the way from New Orleans to Baton Rouge by the year 1812 may also be gathered from a special series of studies dealing with the history of the improvement of the Mississippi for flood control and navigation.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce, *City Map and Street Guide* (Official 1942 edition. Published by Cotton's Holsum Bakers: Baton Rouge).

<sup>17</sup> Data obtained personally from the Louisiana State Department of Public Works, Baton Rouge: April, 1944.

<sup>18</sup> D. O. Elliott, *The Improvement of the Lower Mississippi River for Flood Control and Navigation*, (3 vols., War Department, Corps of Engineers, Experiment Station: Vicksburg, Miss., 1932), *passim*.

There are no data to show that the embankment built along the immediate water front of the city ever crevassed, but several breaks are reported from the section to the south of the city. The Magnolia Mound Levee, for example, has been enlarged three times to prevent further breaks.<sup>19</sup> In 1898, moreover, a cross-levee was erected to the south of the city, extending eastward from the river to a length of 1,548 feet.<sup>20</sup> Subsequent levee developments have kept pace with the industrial growth of the city. Thus, from 1929 to 1933 the highly improved U. S. Baton Rouge-Gay Line was finally erected; it was built in accordance with all the standard requirements of modern engineering operations and provides indeed a maximum of security.

The river itself is about half a mile wide at the reach, and its channel, which is some 60 feet below sea level, allows ocean vessels to come to the city at all seasons of the year. Modern docks and terminal facilities have been provided and at present several hundred ocean-going tank steamers clear the port each year.

Other modern traffic outlets are provided by six Louisiana and National Highway routes, four railroads, three bus lines, a ferry, an airport, and a hugh bridge spanning the river. The Baton Rouge bluff-locality, in other words, has become a complex artery of communication—a traffic area far different from what it was when only a few Indian paths crossed the country.

The city, too, displays a grandeur and complexity that no longer suggest an Indian origin of the place. Viewed from the street level it has an outward appearance very much like any other American metropolis, but when seen from a distance or some height it appears to be set in a regular forest. Countless shade and ornamental trees give it this unique appearance. While the presence of such trees is also characteristic of many other cities the world over, in the case of Baton Rouge it is especially emphatic. The great spread and rich black depth of the trees are quickly grasped by the newcomer.

Most prominent in the city, however, is the civic center with its New State Capitol. Rising to a height of 455 feet, the latter dominates the entire landscape and is truly symbolic of the rapid industrial and political growth of the city. As a modern landmark, therefore, it forms indeed a sharp contrast to the traditional red sitck of the Houma Indians.

<sup>19</sup> Data obtained personally from the Louisiana State Department of Public Works, Baton Rouge: April, 1944.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

## BASIC NATURAL RESOURCES

The origin and early settlement of Baton Rouge cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration the basic natural resources of the bluff-locality, such as climate and weather, soils, vegetation, and animal life. As in any other given area, each of these offers distinct opportunities and certain limitations to human settlement. Their influence upon the early settlers of the place can hardly be over-emphasized. Even today they affect the inhabitants more than is generally recognized.

This is true particularly of climate and weather. Furnishing a specific amount of heat and moisture, these basic resources affect not only the general conditions of growth but also the forms of life themselves. Even the process of soil formation, as is well known to agricultural experts, is conditioned by them. Thus, they exert a definite influence upon vegetation which in turn controls the existence of wild animal life and the human uses of the land. Aside from their broad relations to the problem of human health and comfort, therefore, they had to be well understood by Indians and whites alike before the other resources of the bluff-locality could be turned to good advantage.

Unfortunately, there is no accurate information about the climate and weather conditions of the Baton Rouge area during early historic times. Scientific knowledge of these particular phenomena, as is well known, has been acquired only in recent years. Experts are in agreement, however, that the conditions in question must have been very much the same then as they are now.

From the writings of these experts it is apparent that the climate of Baton Rouge does not differ from that which prevails in the State as a whole.<sup>21</sup> The slight elevation of the bluff-locality is of little or no consequence. It is the subtropical location of the place (Latitude 30° 26' North) that is climatically most important. Other casual factors are: (a) the proximity to the Gulf of Mexico; (b) the open character of the North American continent. The latter makes it possible for northern continental air masses to reach the Lower Mississippi Valley, while the Gulf provides an important source region for tropical air masses coming from the south.

<sup>21</sup> J. B. Kincer, "Climate and Weather Data for the United States," in *Climate and Man* (Yearbook of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture: Washington, D. C., 1941), 894-903 (Louisiana Climatic Summary).

Day-by-day weather changes are caused chiefly by the interaction of the aforementioned air masses. In summer the prevailing southerly winds bring a moist tropical climate tempered by the waters of the Gulf, but this climate is interrupted during periods of varying length by northerly and westerly winds which bring a hotter and drier continental weather. In winter, on the other hand, the area is alternately invaded by warm tropical and cold continental air masses. Occasionally, some polar front waves arrive during this season. Spilling out of the subarctic plains of Canada, they spread rapidly southward and are still cold when they reach the normally mild regions of the Lower Mississippi Valley. Cold spells, therefore, are by no means lacking.

Put briefly, the Baton Rouge bluff-locality enjoys a warm and humid climate. Summers are long and hot, but not oppressively so for the maximum temperature rarely exceeds 100 degrees. The winters, on the other hand, are short and mild. Mid-day temperatures during this season are nearly always pleasantly warm, and only a relatively few nights are distinctly chilly and uncomfortable. Snow is extremely rare; it usually amounts to little more than a few flurries that melt as they touch the ground.

The surface temperature of the soil averages about 50 degrees. However, freezing temperatures are not lacking in winter. The average dates reported for the first killing frost in fall and the last one in spring reveal a frostless period of 269 days. Thus, the growing season is just long enough for certain crops to make two harvests possible.

Rainfall is fairly abundant. It amounts to an average of 58 inches per year, and is well distributed throughout the seasons. In other words, the area can always count on summer rains which are so important for agricultural activities. Being chiefly of convectional origin, these summer rains are almost always of the thunder-shower type. Winter rainfall, on the other hand, is mostly of the drizzly type and of relatively longer duration; it is caused largely by cyclonic or low pressure storms which are commonly associated with a dull, gray, and uniformly overcast sky.

Local storms, including tornados, also occur; they are prevalent in all seasons, but show greater frequency in spring. Furthermore, there are some occasional hurricanes, but the area lies far enough inland to escape the severe effects of this kind of storms. These tropical hurricanes are usually confined to late

summer and early autumn. While it is possible that Hurricane Creek received its name from the occurrence of such a storm, no real connection can be established because hurricanes and tornados are frequently confused in the popular mind.

Specific data obtained by the Baton Rouge Weather Station during a period of 40 years reveal the following averages:<sup>22</sup>

*Temperatures*

January . . . .	53.1 degrees
July . . . . .	81.7 "
Maximum . . .	110 "
Minimum . . .	2 "

*Killing Frosts*

Last one in spring—	Feb. 24
First one in fall—	Nov. 20
Length of growing season—	269 days

*Average Precipitation*

January . . .	5.51 inches	July . . . . .	6.77 inches
February . .	4.75 "	August . . . .	5.56 "
March . . . .	4.77 "	September . .	4.23 "
April . . . .	4.53 "	October . . . .	3.27 "
May . . . . .	5.25 "	November . . .	3.51 "
June . . . . .	4.58 "	December . . .	5.46 "

Closely associated with the climatic conditions of the bluff locality are its soils. Depending upon the particular section, they differ considerably from one farmland to another. Since detailed studies of their distribution have not yet been published, it is impossible to describe here the existing variations. By agricultural experts they are generally classified with the red and yellow podzolic soils that occur throughout an extensive region of the southeastern United States. More specifically, they belong to the well-known Memphis-Grenada Association which has its geographic setting in the Mississippi blufflands.<sup>23</sup>

On the basis of their physical properties they may be briefly characterized as light-brown silt loams that have developed from fine stream-deposited materials. Other distinguishing features are their acidity and relatively low content of organic matter. However, since they have been formed to some extent under a deciduous forest cover, they possess a moderate amount of humus which has a high capacity for absorbing dissolved minerals. Thus, they are more fertile than might be expected.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Mark Baldwin, Charles E. Kellog, and James Thorp, "Soil Classification," in *Soils and Men (Yearbook of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture: Washington, D. C., 1938)*, 1019, 1067.

Generally speaking, they are easily tilled and respond readily to fertilization. At present, they are indeed important producers of a great variety of farm products, including cotton, sugar cane, corn, vegetables, fruits, and a wide range of forage, feed, and soil-building crops. Truck farming in the area is extensive, and new crops are added each year. Dairying and stock raising have also become important activities. The area is now regarded as one of the most fertile agricultural sections of Louisiana.

Wild plant life, on the other hand, has become less and less. The human uses of the land, especially on the part of the white settler, have reduced this important natural resource to a minimum. About 30 square miles of the locality in question are now occupied by the city and its suburbs. The surrounding sections have almost completely been cleared and turned into farmlands. It is only in the easternmost portion of the area where timber stands of both virgin and second growth can still be found; here, even the timber industry still flourishes to some extent.

Recent statistics pertaining to the parish as a whole show the following classification and uses of the land:<sup>24</sup>

Agricultural lands .....	101,352 Acres	
Lands in pasture (with a large portion in second growth timber) .....	108,627	"
Lands in woodland .....	29,848	"
Virgin pine lands .....	9,333	"
Marsh lands (with a small portion in hardwood and cypress timber) ....	8,336	"
Virgin hardwood lands .....	5,534	"
Suburban lands .....	5,034	"
Virgin cypress lands .....	2,717	"
Reforestation lands .....	1,923	"
Cutover forest lands .....	505	"

From the acreages cited for lands still remaining in virgin growth it would appear that the parish was once largely forested in pine. The figures are misleading, however, because they refer only to a very small portion of the entire area and tell us nothing about the original forest cover on the lands close to the bluffline. Besides, it is definitely known that certain pine trees, especially the shortleaf and loblolly varieties, have reforested numerous old fields that were thrown out of cultivation after the Civil War.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> V. H. Sonderegger, *Classification and Uses of Agricultural and Forest Lands in the State of Louisiana and the Parishes* (Department of Conservation, Division of Forestry, Bulletin No. 24: September, 1939, vol. VIII), 55.

<sup>25</sup> Louisiana Department of Conservation, *Louisiana Tree Primer* (Issued by the Division of Forestry, 1941), *passim*.

Actually no pure stand of a single major forest type dominates the area. There is, generally speaking, a nearly equal mingling of two groups: (a) broadleaf trees or hardwoods; (b) coniferous trees or softwoods.<sup>26</sup> The broadleaf trees belong to the southern hardwood forest belt of North America which varies considerably in its composition. Dominant species are: oak, chestnut, hickory, and poplar. The coniferous trees, on the other hand, belong to the southern pine forest which occupies a large section of the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plain. Longleaf, loblolly, shortleaf, and slash pine are the dominant species of this particular forest.

While there is no well-defined ecological segregation between the two groups, the broadleaf trees seem to be better adapted to the immediate bluff-locality. It is quite possible, therefore, that they were the dominant group in this particular area. Such a possibility is suggested by the fact that the pine trees become more numerous in the eastern portion of the parish. The latter, in other words, may be intrusive in the lands close to the bluffline.

A contrasting forest type occurs in the swamps and other poorly drained sections. It is composed of such outstanding trees as the tupelo, gum, and cypress. Among these the cypress is undoubtedly the most striking in appearance; with its fan-shaped crown, fern-like foliage, and flaring base, it is easily recognized and, when draped with Spanish moss, forms a most distinguishing feature of the landscape. The upland-lowland contrast is further emphasized by the fact that the bottom lands are frequently covered with extensive thickets of cane. Other local types found in the lower sections are oak, elm, cottonwood, willow, and locust. The sweet or red gum, interestingly enough, occurs chiefly on the second-bottom lands.

Two peculiarly local trees occurring on the uplands are the live oak and the magnolia. Belonging to an evergreen group which is indigenous to Louisiana, they have always been regarded as native trees. The magnolia which occurs naturally on the bluffs, certainly attains its largest size in the State; with its glistening foliage and large creamy blossoms, it is a most striking and beautiful tree. Both in size and beauty it is rivaled only by the live oak which is indigenous to the coastal section of the

<sup>26</sup> Society of American Foresters, "Forest Cover Types of the Eastern United States: A Report of the Committee on Forest Types," in *Journal of Forestry*, XXX, No. 4 (April, 1932), *passim*; U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Major Forest Types, State of Louisiana* (Forest Service Map, 1934).

State but has found an ecological niche in the bluffs as well. Of the trees of Louisiana this particular oak is perhaps the best known. It is used as a favorite shade tree and is especially conspicuous because of its thick, strong trunk and wide-spreading branches. The French very appropriately called it the "chene-vert".

Both the live oak and the magnolia are sometimes regarded as a true climax forest of the Baton Rouge area. Such an ideal classification, however, does not seem to hold true. As previously stated, no true climax forest can be ascertained in the area; instead, there is a conspicuous mingling of such widely divergent types as hickory, pine, cypress, magnolia, and live oak. A difference of a few feet in elevation often achieves a striking contrast in the forest cover of the area.

The fact that there was a great variety of trees on the very site where the city now stands is clearly revealed in early land descriptions that are contained in Spanish grant papers.<sup>27</sup> These documents furnish an imposing list of trees used by the different claimants as *mojanes de madero*, or wooden landmarks. Unfortunately, the trees in question are not distinguished according to their taxonomic position. Only the name of the genus or that of the family is given. They may be listed as follows:

<i>Beech family:</i> beech	<i>Walnut family:</i> walnut
oak	hickory
red oak	<i>Laurel family:</i> laurel
white oak	<i>Mulberry family:</i> black mulberry
black oak	<i>Sycamore family:</i> sycamore
<i>Elm family:</i> elm	<i>Heath family:</i> huckleberry
<i>Maple family:</i> maple	<i>Bignonia family:</i> catalpa
<i>Olive family:</i> olive	<i>Holly family:</i> holly
ash	<i>Willow family:</i> willow
<i>Witch-hazel family:</i> gum	cottonwood
<i>Pine family:</i> pine	<i>Legume family:</i> honey locust
cypress	
<i>Tupelo family:</i> gum	

Few things finally are more revealing of the city's forest tradition than its street names. There are dozens of streets, drives, lanes, and avenues, as well as a few boulevards, that

<sup>27</sup> U. S. Land Office, *British and Spanish Grants, 1819-1820* (Greensburg, Land Claims. Transcriptions made by Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana: Baton Rouge, 1941-1942), Book A, No. 2, pp. 12, 16, 24, 54, 67, 70; Book A, No. 3, Part I, pp. 319, 339, 342; Book A, No. 3, Part II, pp. 58, 64, 86, 252, 348, 359.

appear to have received their names from outstanding trees of the area. Although it is by no means certain that the trees in question actually grew there, every one of the aforementioned varieties is perpetuated in an old street name. Until 1942 there were indeed so many of these names that a considerable number had to be changed to eliminate duplication.<sup>28</sup>

Trees, however, were not the only class of the original vegetation, for grass and brushlands were also present. Even today, the forests that still remain in virgin growth are commonly open, and the ground between the trees is covered with grass and brush. This is true particularly of the pine forest, but a limited amount of grass and brushy undergrowth also occurs in the mixed hardwood group. The trees themselves vary considerably in their habits: some are large; others are small and of low-spreading habits; still others exist merely in the form of a shrub. A few families, especially the holly, sumach, and rose, form extensive thickets that are surpassed only by those of the wild cane.

There is also the fact that the area contained open tracts of considerable size. In an early French census table of 1722 it is definitely stated that there were many prairies at Baton Rouge.<sup>29</sup> The former existence of prairies, moreover, is still suggested by the presence of the holly family which, according to plant geographers, is nearly always associated with prairie conditions. The Baton Rouge bluff-locality, in other words, was a semi-wooded prairie rather than a regular forest.

In this semi-wooded prairie a richly-varied animal life, no doubt, found an attractive habitat and took full advantage of the luxuriant vegetation. Game animals, both large and small, must have been plentiful before the present city was built and the surrounding area turned into farmlands and pastures. For some of them are still sufficiently numerous to be hunted. They ranged from the tiny saucy squirrel to the black bear. Even the bison is known to have visited the area prior to and during the period of the early French colonization.<sup>30</sup>

No information is available about the relative abundance of the different species during early historic times. Many of them

<sup>28</sup> Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce, *op. cit.*, map (1942).

<sup>29</sup> Jay K. Ditchy (trans.), "Early Census Tables of Louisiana," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XIII (1930), 223.

<sup>30</sup> George H. Lowery, Jr., "Check-List of the Mammals of Louisiana and Adjacent Waters," in *Occasional Papers of the Museum of Zoology, Louisiana State University*, No. 13 (November 22, 1943), pp. 213-257, *passim*.

have disappeared. The bison and the wild turkey, two much-prized game animals of the Indians, were the first to become extinct. Bears are also gone, unless a few of them are still hiding out in the section known as Devils Swamp. Today, hunters still kill an occasional deer or trail a fox, but their chief game consists of cotton-tail rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, and opossums. The area is primarily known for its hunting of quails, ducks, doves, and wild geese.

Fish and other aquatic life are still plentiful in the streams and swampy grounds. Among amphibians and reptiles the turtle, snake, frog, and alligator are found in abundance. Muskrats are encountered in swampy places near the city. In the eastern portion of the area even beaver colonies are still quite common. The creeks and bayous furnish indeed fine fishing grounds, but fishing itself has now become a recreational activity rather than a regular food quest.

A recent check-list of Louisiana mammals gives the following species as belonging to the Baton Rouge area:<sup>31</sup>

- Virginia Opossum (*Didelphis Virginiana Pigra*—Bangs)
- Louisiana Black Bear (*Euarctos Luteolus*—Griffith)
- Raccoon (*Procyon Lotor Varius*—Nelson and Goldman)
- Long-tailed Weasel (*Mustela Frenata Arthuri*—Hall)
- Mink (*Mustela Vison Vulgiva*—Bangs)
- River Otter (*Lutra Canadensis Texensis*—Goldman)
- Gulf Spotted Skunk (*Spilogale Indianola*—Merriam)
- Gray Fox (*Urocyon Cinereus Argentius Floridanus*—Rhoads)
- Southern Wolf (*Canis Niger Gregoryi*—Goldman)
- Bobcat (*Lynx Rufus Floridanus*—Rafinesque)
- Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias Striatus Pipilans*)
- Eastern Gray Squirrel (intermediate between *Sciurus Carolinensis Carolinensis*—Gmelin; and *Sciurus Carolinensis Fuliginosus*—Bachman)
- Fox Squirrel (intergrade between *Sciurus Niger Bachmani*—Lowery and Davis; and *Sciurus Niger Subauratus*—Bachman)
- Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys Volans Saturatus*—Howell)
- Beaver (*Castor Canadensis Carolinensis*—Rhoads)
- Muskrat (*Ondatra Zibethicus Rivalicus*—Bangs)
- Eastern Cotton-tail (*Sylvilagus Floridanus Alacer*—Bangs)
- Swamp Rabbit (*Sylvilagus Aquaticus Aquaticus*—Bachman)
- White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus Virginianus Louisianae*—Allen)
- Bison (*Bison Bison*—Linnaeus)

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

The presence of these quadrupeds, together with the numerous game birds, fish, and other forms of aquatic life, constituted a most important natural resource for the Indians. To them game animals were the source of both food and clothing. With the coming of the white man, however, an indiscriminate slaughtering began and many of the aforementioned species are now extremely rare. It is only in recent years that serious efforts have been made by the State to prevent the extinction of rare species and to remedy the threatened shortage of others.

#### PREHISTORIC INDIANS

Long before the year 1699, that is, the time when the written history of the area began, a group of prehistoric Indians had already found an ecological niche in the Baton Rouge bluff-locality. That these early occupants should have been attracted to the place is by no means surprising. Abounding in basic natural resources, having a salubrious climate, and being located on high grounds close to the east bank of North America's greatest river, the locality possessed indeed every requirement for becoming a human settlement.

Although there is no trace or suggestion of any culture being over one thousand years old, the evidence for the existence of several prehistoric cultures is conclusive. It consists primarily of archaeological remains of which a series of unexcavated earthworks or so-called "Indian Mounds" furnish the most convincing proof. Among these earthworks are above all the well-preserved "twin mounds" on the Louisiana State University Campus. Another important group comprises the three mounds found on a site formerly owned by the Kleinpeters. Two of these structures are partly removed, but the third is still well preserved. The place in question is about twelve miles southeast of the present city, close to the intersection of Bayou Fountain with Bayou Manchac.<sup>32</sup>

Within the area of the city itself the former existence of several mounds has been reported. Traces of one of them can still be discerned on the new State Capitol grounds. Another one is said to be in existence on the Magnolia Place, near the corner of Nicholson Drive and McKinley Street, but it has not yet been

<sup>32</sup> Louisiana State University Archeological Survey, *Notes on Archeological Remains of East Baton Rouge Parish*, Nos. 1-12 (1936-1939), Louisiana State University, School of Geology.

identified by archaeologists. Each of the following places, moreover, is reported to have once been covered with an Indian mound:<sup>33</sup>

- (a) Lafayette Street, near Main Street.
- (b) Site of the American Aluminum Company Plant, near Monte Sano Bayou.
- (c) City square No. 2, between Boulevard and Convention Street.
- (d) Corner of Boulevard and Repentence Street.
- (e) McHatton's Place.
- (f) Daigle and Bexler Plantations.

On the low bluffs to the southeast of the city several ancient earthworks of a distinct nature are scattered along Bayou Fountain and the present Highland Road. Unlike the regular Indian mounds, they are mere accumulations of discarded shells. However, the presence of certain types of potsherds indicates a prehistoric occupancy of these shell heaps or so-called "kitchen middens".<sup>34</sup> One of the middens, a small one of indeterminate shape, is located on the Mitchell Place. A second, which is likewise irregular in shape, is on the Knox Place. On the Wilson Place is a third one which was reported as being dome-shaped, but is now almost completely removed.

In connection with the prehistoric occupancy of these middens it is of special interest to note that the shellfish consumed by the occupants belong to the familiar clam *Rangea cuneata* which demands brakish conditions for its growth. These clams, according to Dr. Fred Kniffen of the Louisiana State University, must have been obtained at a considerable distance from the middens, probably from the Spanish Lake region.<sup>35</sup>

From the point of view of a historical reconstruction, however, the mounds are far more important. Unlike the middens, they are characterized by definite and intentional shapes. Their clearly artificial nature can indeed still be recognized at the Louisiana State University twin mounds and the Kleinpeter mounds. Rising from a circular base and tapering upward to a

<sup>33</sup> J. St. Clair Favrot, "Baton Rouge, the Historic Capital of Louisiana," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XII (1929), 614-615. See also, James S. Peacock and Judge Carrighan, "Historical and Statistical Sketches of Louisiana," in *DeBow's Review*, XI (1851), 611.

<sup>34</sup> Fred B. Kniffen, "The Indian Mounds of Iberville Parish," in *Reports on the Geology of Iberville and Ascension Parishes* (Geological Bulletin No. 13, Department of Conservation, Louisiana Geological Survey: New Orleans, August, 1938), 195, 198.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

point, the former belong to a variety designated by archaeologists as conical. The Kleinpeter mounds, on the other hand, were built in the shape of a truncated pyramid. Only one of them still reveals this particular shape, but archaeological experts believe that all three belong to the rectangular, flat-topped variety.

The historical significance of the mounds localized in the Baton Rouge bluff-locality lies in the fact that they reveal the same two fundamental mound-building patterns which occur throughout the entire area of the Eastern United States. Thus, it is only against the background of a general knowledge of the so-called "Mound Builders" that the significance of the Baton Rouge mounds can be fully understood. This is true especially since they have not yet been excavated. It is true also for the simple reason that they are situated in the Lower Mississippi Valley which forms the main axis of the distribution of the North American mound-building cultures.<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, the course of aboriginal history in the mound-building area of the Eastern United States has not yet been outlined in an incisive form. Experts still differ a great deal in their interpretations of the areal and temporal manifestations of the different mound-building cultures. Even the cultural contents themselves, which represent a complex combination of differences and similarities, are still variously interpreted.

That the mounds were erected by a prehistoric people has long been recognized. It has also been known for a long time that they were built by a group of people who practiced this particular custom throughout the Eastern United States. The uncertainty of their use, however, led to many erroneous speculations about their origin. Thus, deeply rooted in the mind of the public is the erroneous concept set forth by early writers that the mounds were erected as a special protection against inundations.<sup>37</sup> A second fallacy perpetuated by the laymen is the early belief that the mound-builders were a people altogether different from the American Indians—a mysteriously vanished race.<sup>38</sup>

Archaeologists and ethno-historians know by now that the structures in question were built by the direct ancestors of our historic Indians. Furthermore, they know that the custom of

<sup>36</sup> James A. Ford and Gordon R. Willey, "An Interpretation of the Prehistory of the Eastern United States," in *American Anthropologist*, XLIII, No. 3 (July-September, 1941), p. 327.

<sup>37</sup> Henry Clyde Shetrone, *The Mound-Builders* (New York, 1930), 342.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 6 ff.

mound-building persisted into proto-historic times and in some localities even into the historic period. Historic records definitely state that the Natchez Indians of Mississippi were still using their mounds when the French appeared on the scene.<sup>39</sup> Recent excavations, moreover, have disclosed the all-important fact that the prehistoric communities of the mound-builders belonged to widely varying cultures, and a total picture of the development of these cultures is gradually emerging from the researches carried on by Southeastern archaeologists.<sup>40</sup>

Generally speaking, two distinct patterns can be recognized: (a) the use of conical-shaped mounds for burial purposes; (b) the use of truncated pyramidal mounds as platforms for important civic or religious buildings, such as a temple, a council house, or the residence of a chief. According to stratigraphical evidence, they represent two distinct chronological stages in the historical development of the aboriginal mound-building cultures. There are strong indications, moreover, that both spread throughout the Eastern United States by way of the Lower Mississippi Valley.

The burial mound pattern appeared first, although certain cultures other than those of the mound-builders were already present. With regard to the time of its introduction a guess date of about 900 A. D. has been advanced by archaeologists. Its most outstanding culture trait is a peculiar set of ideas centering around a mortuary complex. Many of the skeletons were apparently stripped of the flesh before they were placed in the mounds. As shown by the slight charring of the bones, the idea of partial cremation was also common. The mounds, which occur characteristically along the brow of a bluff, were generally built at some distance from the dwellings. Their chief purpose, no doubt, was to heighten the emphasis placed on a cult of the dead.

Aside from this strange mortuary complex, the Burial Mound cultures are characterized by the possession of a rudimentary agriculture and a crude pottery. The latter, curiously enough, was not used for burial offerings. Grave goods, in fact, are very scarce among the archaeological remains of these cultures. Artifacts, on the other hand, are numerous; but they show a great deal of localization and specialization. Notable remains are clay pipes which reveal the smoking of tobacco.

<sup>39</sup> Antoine S. Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane* (3 vols., Paris, 1758), III, 18.

<sup>40</sup> Ford and Willey, *loc. cit.*, XLIII, 325 ff.

During a later phase an increasing complexity of the same cultures is shown by the following traits: (a) the erection of special enclosures around the mound groups; (b) building of mounds in two or more stages; (c) increase in secondary burials and cremations; (d) erection and elaboration of special log tombs; (e) burial of decapitated skulls. The pottery also shows a marked advance; it is of better construction and firing, and begins to have some surface decorations. Surface treatment of the clay vessels includes, above all, a cord-marked type of decoration which by some archaeologists is believed to have come directly from Asia.<sup>41</sup>

A still greater cultural advance, however, is exhibited by the Temple Mound cultures which superseded those of the Burial Mounds. The most distinctive trait of these cultures, as previously stated, is the use of truncated pyramidal mounds as substructures for important civic and religious buildings. Another diagnostic trait is the symmetrical arrangement of the mounds around an open square or central plaza. Many of the Temple Mounds, moreover, were provided with special terraces, ramps, and even stairways. The graves, unlike those of the preceding cultures, occur in small scattered cemeteries that are generally situated at some distance from the villages and the mounds.

The greater complexity of the Temple Mound cultures is also shown by the extensive use of shell, bone, and copper. Furthermore, the village sites are larger and are distributed over a much larger geographical area. This would seem to indicate a greater dependence upon agriculture and a marked advance in this particular economic activity. The skeletal remains, interestingly enough, reveal the arrival of a new population element in the Southeastern Culture Area: broadheads with fronto-occipital flattening who mixed with the earlier undeformed longheads.

Many traits of the Temple Mound cultures are similar to those found in the mound-building cultures of Middle America, and the possibility of their relationship with these southern cultures can by no means be precluded. Often cited as evidence of contact with Mexico are: (a) the shape and grouping of the mounds; (b) the additional terraces, ramps, and stairways; (c) advanced work in flint, especially the manufacture of beautiful

<sup>41</sup> W. C. McKern, "An Hypothesis for the Asiatic Origin of the Woodland Culture Pattern," in *American Antiquity*, III, No. 2 (1937), p. 138.

long blades; (d) certain specialized pottery shapes; (e) the art of overlaying other materials with copper; (f) the high development of engraving upon marine shells; (g) rude idols and stone effigy pipes; (h) circular gorgets cut from marine shells; (i) stylistic tendencies in anthropomorphic designs.<sup>42</sup>

There is indeed something unique in the North American mound-building cultures that has always compelled scholars to seek their origin elsewhere. Formerly they have been traced variously to such distant peoples as the Chinese, Hebrews, Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Irish.<sup>43</sup> Even in recent times the quaint theory has been advanced that the basic elements of the North American mound-building cultures were derived from Africa by way of a pre-Columbian Negro colony that is supposed to have existed in Mexico.<sup>44</sup> There is also an interesting speculation on the possibility that the Burial Mound cultures, like the aforementioned cord-marked type of pottery decoration, had a separate Asiatic connection.

Fortunately, archaeologists have succeeded in disposing of such romantic and fanciful theories. The possibility of some sort of contact with Middle America, however, cannot be precluded. This is true especially with regard to the Temple Mound cultures. Some scholars, therefore, assume that the North American mound-builders were originally Mayan emigrants, but there is no real basis for such an assumption.<sup>45</sup> At present, all that can possibly be said is the fact that there are a number of characteristics, particularly in the Temple Mound cultures, which are inescapably Middle American in origin and which can be interpreted only as the result of certain historical connections with this region.

The exact nature of these connections is not known. Some of the traits in question point to a diffusion by way of the southwestern United States, while others suggest a direct maritime contact. An Antillean derivation is generally considered unlikely.<sup>46</sup> Most of the traits seem to be linked to a complex religious

<sup>42</sup> Philip Phillips, "Middle American Influences on the Archeology of the Southeastern United States," in *The Maya and Their Neighbors* (New York and London, 1940), 368-374, *passim*. See also, Carl E. Guthe, "Sequence of Culture in the Eastern United States," in *ibid.*, 368-374, *passim*.

<sup>43</sup> Shetrone, *op. cit.*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Leo Wiener, *Africa and the Discovery of America* (3 vols., Philadelphia, 1922), II, 117, 176; III, 365.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Radin, *The Story of the American Indian* (New York, 1940), 162, 195.

<sup>46</sup> S. Lovén, *Origins of the Tainan Culture, West Indies* (Göteborg, 1935), 161.

system; thus, they suggest a ceremonial infiltration rather than the diffusion of an entire culture. In other words, a few religious leaders rather than an entire tribal group may have been responsible for their introduction.

Whatever the real origin of the North American mound-building cultures may have been, the important fact remains that both the Burial Mound pattern and that of the Temple Mounds are clearly represented in the Baton Rouge area. The twin mounds on the Louisiana State University campus belong definitely to the Burial Mound pattern, while the Kleinpeter mounds were Temple Mounds. Thus, they constitute important source materials for the reconstruction of the prehistoric reality of the area and should be treated as such, not only by the historical profession but also by the public. Baton Rougeans should be proud of the fact that the early human history of their locality began with a group of mound-builders who about one thousand years ago were already attracted to the place. They should make every effort, therefore, to preserve the cultural landmarks left by this ancient group.

#### THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN

The coming of the white man to the Baton Rouge bluff-locality is intimately connected with the exploration and colonization ventures of two European nations: Spain and France. Spaniards, as is well known, found their way first into the Gulf of Mexico and, shortly after Columbus had discovered the West Indies, began to explore the northern coast of the Gulf.

Thus, in 1519, Alvarez de Pineda reported that he had found a great river, the Rio del Espiritu Santo, which is assumed to have been the Mississippi.<sup>47</sup> He and his men are sometimes mentioned as having ascended the river and remained in the interior for several weeks. If this is true, they may well have been the first white men to sight the Baton Rouge bluffs. The account of this early exploration is geographically too obscure, however, to be trusted.

During the following decades Spain continued her explorations of the Gulf coast. In 1528 she even made an unsuccessful attempt to establish a colony near Pensacola Bay.<sup>48</sup> The Lower

<sup>47</sup> Alfred B. Thomas, "Spanish Activities in the Lower Mississippi Valley, 1513-1698," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXII (1939), 924-933. See also, John Fiske, *The Discovery of America* (2 vols., Boston, 1892), II, 486.

<sup>48</sup> *Idem.*

Mississippi Valley, on the other hand, was not visited until De Soto and his men made their famous march through the Southeast (1539-1542). This famous march, according to the chroniclers of the expedition, came to an end near the mouth of the Red River where De Soto died on April 17, 1542.<sup>49</sup> Thus, De Soto himself never saw the Baton Rouge bluffs, but his followers under the leadership of Luis de Moscoso certainly passed them while descending the Mississippi to the Gulf.

Although the Spaniards claimed the vast territory of the Lower Mississippi Valley as a part of Florida, they did not consolidate their interests in this section of the country. The exploration of the Father of Waters was left to the French. Journeying southward from their possessions in Canada, these newcomers reached the Gulf nearly a century and a half after De Soto's time. They were determined, however, to take over the entire valley and defend it against the Spaniards and the English who in the meantime had established themselves on the Atlantic coast.

It was the French, therefore, rather than the Spaniards or the English, who became the founders of what is now Baton Rouge. The first French explorer who descended the Mississippi in its entire length was La Salle. He reached the Gulf in 1682 and decided at once to establish a colony there.<sup>50</sup> Before making his difficult return journey to Canada, he took formal possession of the land in the name of the French king. The Baton Rouge bluff-locality, as can well be imagined, was not explored by him; it is not even mentioned in the records of his expedition, although it was passed twice by this early exploring party.

In 1684 La Salle sailed from France with a regular colonizing expedition to carry out his favorite project: the establishment of a French colony on the Gulf. He skirted the shores of the Gulf, but failed to locate the mouth of the Mississippi. His attempt at colonization resulted in immediate failure, and shortly after he was treacherously killed by one of his own men.<sup>51</sup>

The final French expedition of importance to the establishment of Louisiana and the founding of Baton Rouge was that of

<sup>49</sup> United States De Soto Expedition Commission, "Final Report," in *House Document No. 71*, 76 Cong., 1 Sess. (Washington, 1939), pp. 209, 258, 264.

<sup>50</sup> Isaac Joslin Cox (ed.), *The Journeys of René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle* (2 vols., Trail Makers Series: New York, 1905), I, 238 ff.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

Pierre Le Moyne, a young Canadian, better known in history as Iberville. On October 24, 1698, this famous expedition sailed from France with two ships, the *Badin* and the *Marin*, carrying two hundred soldiers and settlers. Iberville was specially commissioned by the French crown to establish a colony on the Gulf coast and to start commercial relations with the Indians. With him was his younger brother, Jean Baptiste Sieur de Bienville, who in 1701 became the governor of the new colony.

Upon their arrival on the shores of the Gulf Iberville and Bienville left the frigates at what is now Ship Island and then set out in small boats to make a thorough examination of the coast. Unlike La Salle, they succeeded in finding the mouth of the Mississippi and began their upstream journey. With Indians serving as guides and interpreters, a systematic exploration was made in 1699 approximately as far as the mouth of the Red River.

During this upstream voyage daily records were kept by De Sauvole de la Villantry, an ensign from the frigate *Cheval Marin*.<sup>52</sup> This officer evidently had transferred his record-keeping activity to one of the smaller boats, for the entries in question form a part of the log book of the *Marin*. Iberville also kept a journal.<sup>53</sup> Another contemporary account of the expedition is contained in a Historical Narrative dated from 1698 to 1722.<sup>54</sup> The author of this narrative, M. Jean Penicaut, was a simple ship's carpenter but seems to have learned more of the new country than his compatriots. His writings furnish some important information not found elsewhere, although chronologically they are not always accurate.

It is in these early records that we have the first unmistakable reference to the Baton Rouge bluff-locality and the sole description of its first exploration.

On March 16, 1699, the day before the discovery of the Baton Rouge site, the exploring party had made its camp near a body of water which is now known as Bayou Manchac. This is quite evident from the following entry made in the log book:

We landed and put up our shelters about a league above an arm which they the Indians had told us at the village of the Bayogoula was the fork. It is nothing but a lake, through which we could travel to within four or five leagues of our ships.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 213-289.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 131-209.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 375-586.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 263.

Obviously, the "arm" in question is none other than Bayou Manchac, for it is only this particular bayou that connects the Mississippi River with Lake Pontchartrain and the Gulf coast where the French had left their frigates.<sup>56</sup>

The next day Iberville and his men continued their upstream journey and reached the famous Red Pole site of the Houma Indians. There is no indication in the ship's log that this site was in the Baton Rouge bluff-locality, but the following data are given with regard to its distance from the place where the explorers had camped the night before:

On Tuesday the 17th, around seven in the morning, we embarked again, the river winds around the same turn as on the day preceding, but the current is not so swift. Three leagues from the place where we spent the night we left behind our two canoes, . . . together with some men to go hunting, . . . Around three o'clock in the afternoon we put ashore. . . . Two of the men that we left behind to go hunting two leagues down the river, just came overland to our shelters.<sup>57</sup>

The party, in other words, traveled about five leagues that day. This, together with the one-league distance of their previous camp from Bayou Manchac, places the Red Pole site about six leagues or 18 river miles north of the same bayou. The site in question, therefore, was definitely in the Baton Rouge locality. It is also interesting to note in this connection that the log book does not mention any further meander of the river during the voyage to the Red Pole site.

The site itself is described as follows:

. . . we landed near a river, which is like a lake, where the savages informed us there were many fish; we found there several cabins covered with palmettos constructed by the Houmas, who came here to hunt and fish. They had even erected there a pole, thirty feet high, on which there were some fishbones.<sup>58</sup>

Iberville's description is fundamentally the same, although it adds a few significant details. Bearing the same date as that of the ship's log, it reads:

On the 17th of March, 1699 we proceeded to a little river, on the right of the river [the Mississippi] five leagues and a half from our camp, where they informed us that there

<sup>56</sup> See any authoritative map of the State of Louisiana.

<sup>57</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 263.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

was a great quantity of fish. . . . The little river separates the hunting grounds of the Bayougoulas from those of the Oumas. On its bank are many cabins covered with palmettos and a maypole without branches, reddened, with several heads of fish and bears attached as a sacrifice.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, Iberville places the Red Pole site definitely on the east bank of the Mississippi. He also ascribes to it a marginal position between the hunting grounds of the Houma and Bayougoula and, interestingly enough, adds another half of a league to its distance from the place where the explorers had their previous camp. Furthermore, he emphasizes the artificial structure of the pole and its ceremonial significance. Like the ship's log, however, his account does not mention any bluffs; neither does it give a name for the place.

It is only Penicaut who records the name of the locality, and it is he alone who explains the origin of this place-name. Penicaut is also the only contemporary writer who mentions the bluffs. His account is as follows:

From there [the previous camp near Bayou Manchac] we ascended five leagues farther, where we found very high banks, which in that country are called bluffs and in the savage tongue Istrouma, which means Baton Rouge, because there is at this place a pole painted red, which the savages had erected to mark the dividing line of the two nations, to wit, that of the Bayougoulas, whence we had come, and another thirty leagues above Baton Rouge called Oumas.<sup>60</sup>

The Red Pole site, then, is placed definitely in the Baton Rouge bluff-locality. Also its marginal position to the territories of the Houma and Bayougoula is emphasized. The statement that the red pole served as a boundary mark should be accepted with caution, however; for such a practice, as will be pointed out later, is not reported anywhere among the American Indians.

Summing up the data pertaining to the coming of the French to the Baton Rouge bluff-locality, it is evident that the first exploring party landed near a little river on the banks of which an historic Indian group, the Houma, had a hunting and fishing camp. The same Indians had also erected a reddened pole there and given the place a name signifying this particular cultural landmark. The name, according to Penicaut, is Istrouma and means Baton Rouge.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 173.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 395.

## THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE RED POLE SITE

Although there is little doubt that the Red Pole site explored by the Iberville expedition was on a little river somewhere along the Baton Rouge Reach, the task of locating it is admittedly a complex one. Even the little river cannot be identified with absolute certainty. The complexity of the task arises largely from the lack of early cartographic evidence. It is not until 1731 that the name Baton Rouge appears for the first time on a map, but this particular map merely shows the location of the first French plantation in the area.<sup>61</sup>

The task of locating the site is further complicated by the fact that there are at least three small bodies of water that find their outlets into the Mississippi along the Baton Rouge Reach. They are Bayou Garrison, Bayou Monte Sano, and a third one near Scott Bluffs part of which is known as Lake Kernan.<sup>62</sup> To the north of the Reach, beyond the bend of the Mississippi, a fourth bayou enters the river and is still known as Baton Rouge Bayou. The obvious question, therefore, is which of these bayous was the little river on which the Houma Indians had their Red Pole site.<sup>63</sup>

Mr. Alcée Fortier, a prominent Louisiana historian, is not perturbed by this question; he simply identifies the little river as the Bayou Manchac.<sup>64</sup> Dr. Pierce Butler, another prominent scholar, favors the same identification and stresses the fact that Iberville does not mention any bluffs.<sup>65</sup> Both are obviously in error. A careful examination of the daily entries in both Iberville's journal and the log book of the Marin clearly reveals that the French explorers had passed Bayou Manchac on the day before they reached the Red Pole site.

The difficulty of accepting Fortier's identification has been brilliantly dealt with by Dr. William O. Scroggs of the Louisiana State University. In a brief study dealing with the origin of the name Baton Rouge this scholar definitely places the Red Pole site in the Baton Rouge bluff-locality.<sup>66</sup> However, he appears

<sup>61</sup> Raymond Thomassy, *Geologique Pratique de la Louisiane* (New Orleans and Paris, 1860), map facing page 226.

<sup>62</sup> See "Simplified Sketch Map" of the Baton Rouge Reach, Plate II, herein.

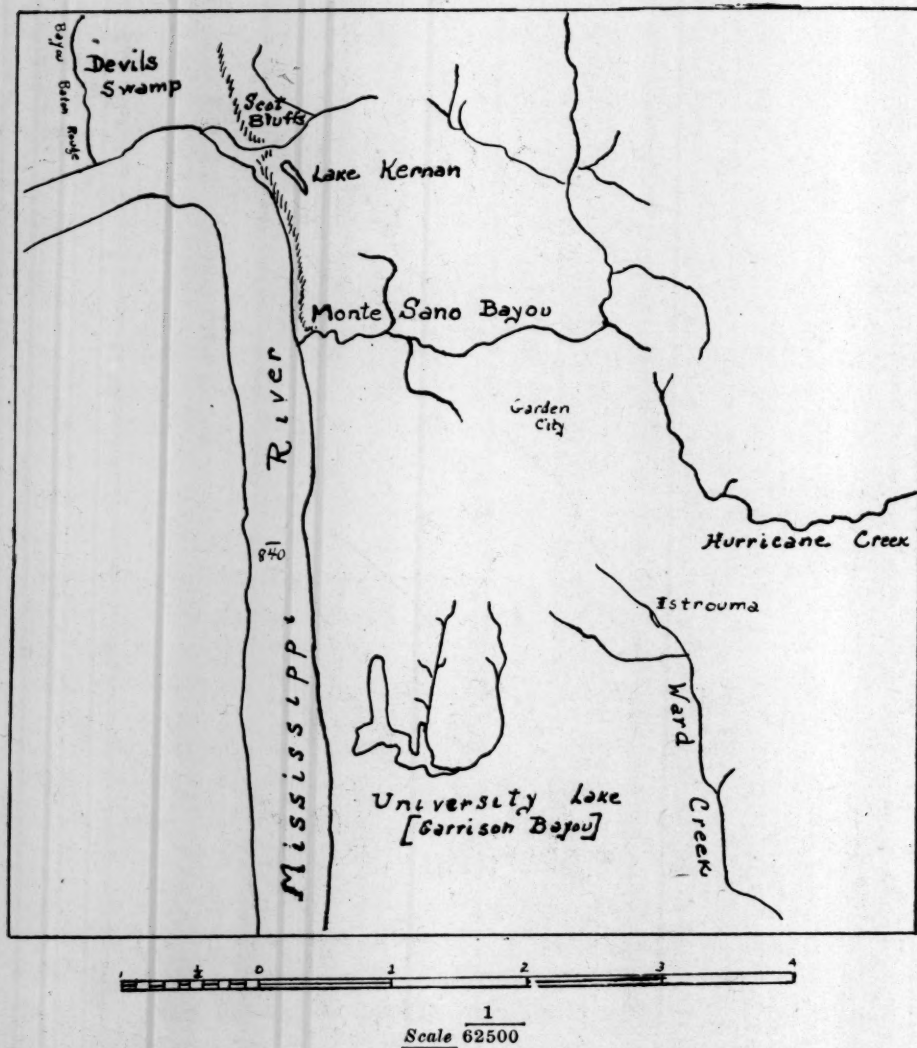
<sup>63</sup> William O. Scroggs, "Origin of the Name Baton Rouge," in *Proceedings of the Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge*, I (August, 1917), 20-24.

<sup>64</sup> Alcée Fortier, *A History of Louisiana* (4 vols., New York, 1904), I, 38-39.

<sup>65</sup> Pierce Butler, "Baton Rouge in History and Literature," in *Proceedings of the Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge*, I (August, 1917), 39-48.

<sup>66</sup> Scroggs, *loc. cit.*, I, 20-24.

## PLATE II



*Simplified Sketch Map of the Baton Rouge Reach and adjacent section on the east bank of the river, showing: present University Lake, Monte Sano Bayou and the Scot Bluffs area with Lake Kernan.*

to have made a slight error himself by assuming that Bayou Garrison was the little river in question, for the distance of this particular bayou from Manchac Landing is only 14 river miles where the interval cited by the explorers amounts to at least 18 miles. Dr. Scroggs seems to have overlooked the fact that the French had their camp one league above the Manchac and, apparently, considered only the five leagues traveled by the explorers the next day on their way to the Red Pole site.

As far as the exact distance between Bayou Manchac and the little river is concerned, the early records are not quite in agreement themselves. This is due largely to the fact that they do not always specify the position of the French camp near Bayou Manchac. Only the log book of the Marin clearly states that the camp was one league above this bayou. Iberville and Penicaut, on the other hand, merely speak of it as having been near the bayou and, thus, lead the reader to believe that it was close to it. In regard to the distance between the camp and the Red Pole site the disagreement is negligible. Penicaut mentions five leagues. The ship's log gives the same number, but does it somewhat indirectly. Iberville cites five leagues and a half.

Perhaps one should not take these linear measures too literally, for they are bound to be mere approximations. Some scholars actually suspect that the French writers used the term league indefinitely or even poetically. This suspicion, however, is unwarranted. There are many ethno-historians who have had to realize, much to their own surprise, that the distances cited by early explorers correspond in most cases fairly well with the actual situation. This is true particularly in those cases where only short distances are involved. It is true also in regard to journeys on land where the French league was equivalent to an hour's walk. Even on their stream voyages the French explorers had almost always a definite linear measure in mind when they used the term league.

Thus, if the distance from Bayou Manchac to the little river is to be used at all as a means of locating the Red Pole site, the ship's log must be accepted as the most authoritative source. Its official nature can by no means be ignored. Besides, it is the only official document which specifies the exact position of the French camp near the Manchac.

Accepting the entries of the log book as the most accurate, the question arises whether there have been any changes in the course of the Mississippi since then. Hydrographic experts are certain, however, of the river's stability in this particular section during the last three hundred years.<sup>67</sup> It is only when the meander area to the south of the Baton Rouge Reach is included that any changes in the river mileage during historic times can be recognized. Thus, between Baton Rouge and Donaldsonville the following changes have been recorded: 47 miles in 1765; 51.2 miles in 1820; 53.2 miles in 1929.<sup>68</sup> The distance between these two places, in other words, was less two hundred years ago than it is now. But this fact has little bearing on the 18-mile distance between the Manchac and the little river of the Red Pole site. The section involved is far too short and includes only one bend below the Reach. If there was a slight change at all, it would merely place the Red Pole site a little further north.

According to the present river mileage, then, the use of the linear measure cited in the ship's log places the little river of the Red Pole site near the uppermost end of the Baton Rouge Reach, that is, in the neighborhood of the Scott Bluffs. Interestingly enough, the bayou which finds its outlet into the Mississippi near these bluffs still forms a small lake known as Lake Kernan.<sup>69</sup> This lake-like character is in full accordance with the description of the little river in the log book of the *Marin*. Bayou Garrison, on the banks of which Dr. Scroggs places the Red Pole site, also forms a small lake; but this particular lake, the Old University Lake, is strictly an artificial one. Besides, the distance of Bayou Garrison from the Manchac falls at least four miles short of that cited in the ship's log.

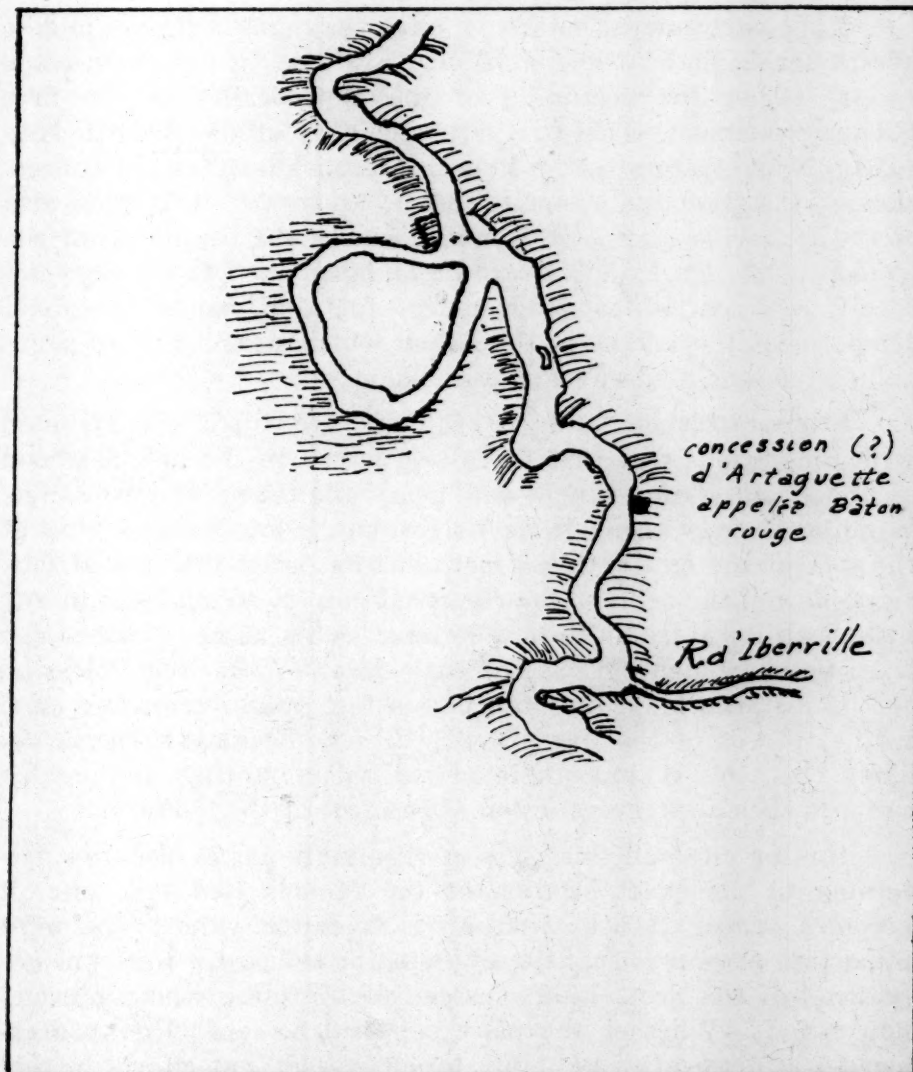
The conclusion that the Red Pole site—the original Baton Rouge—was near the Scott Bluffs is much strengthened by the significant fact that there are at least four old maps on which the name Baton Rouge is entered near the bend of the Mississippi, that is, in the neighborhood of these particular bluffs. The maps in question are: (a) D'Anville's *Carte de Louisiane* (1732); (b) Lieut. Ross' *Map of the Course of the Mississippi* (1765); (c)

<sup>67</sup> Richard J. Russell, "Physiography of the Lower Mississippi River Delta," in *Geological Bulletin No. 8* (Department of Conservation, Louisiana Geological Survey: New Orleans, November, 1936), 121 ff.

<sup>68</sup> Richard J. Russell, "Physiography of Iberville and Ascension Parishes," in *Geological Bulletin No. 13* (Department of Conservation, Louisiana Geological Survey: New Orleans, August, 1938), 53.

<sup>69</sup> Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce, *op. cit.*, map (1942).

PLATE III



*Simplified Sketch Map of the Broutin Map (1731); showing the location of the D'Artaquette concession. Taken from a copy in: Thomassy, Raymond. *Geologique Pratique de La Louisiane*. New Orleans and Paris, 1860; p. 226.*

Captain Pittman's *Draught of the River Mississippi from the Balize up to the Fort Chartres* (1770); (d) Wilton's "Manuscript Map of British Land Grants along the Mississippi River" (1774).<sup>70</sup>

Other early maps, it is true, have the name near the middle of the Reach, that is, where the city now stands; but these maps specify either the beginning of the bluff-locality or the first French settlement. This is true particularly of the Broutin Map (1731) which refers to the French establishment as the concession of D'Artaguet "appelée Baton Rouge."<sup>71</sup> It is true also of the D'Anville Map (1732) which marks the beginning of the bluff-locality. Du Pratz's *Carte de la Louisiane* (1758) does not specify any particular geographical fact but has a locational symbol near the middle of the Reach which signifies in all probability the site of the French establishment.

Ethno-historians and geographers are further confronted with the curious fact that there is a bayou in the neighborhood of the Scott Bluffs which still bears the name Baton Rouge. Winding its way through Devils Swamp, a low section lying at the foot of the bluffs, this stream has its outlet into the Mississippi beyond the bend of the river.<sup>72</sup> There is no evidence in any historical literature as to how it received its name. Neither can it be possibly identified as the little river of the Red Pole site, for its distance from the Manchac is far greater than any cited in the records of the Iberville expedition. Besides, it seems unlikely that the Houma Indians had their hunting and fishing camp in such a swampy section at the foot of the bluffs.

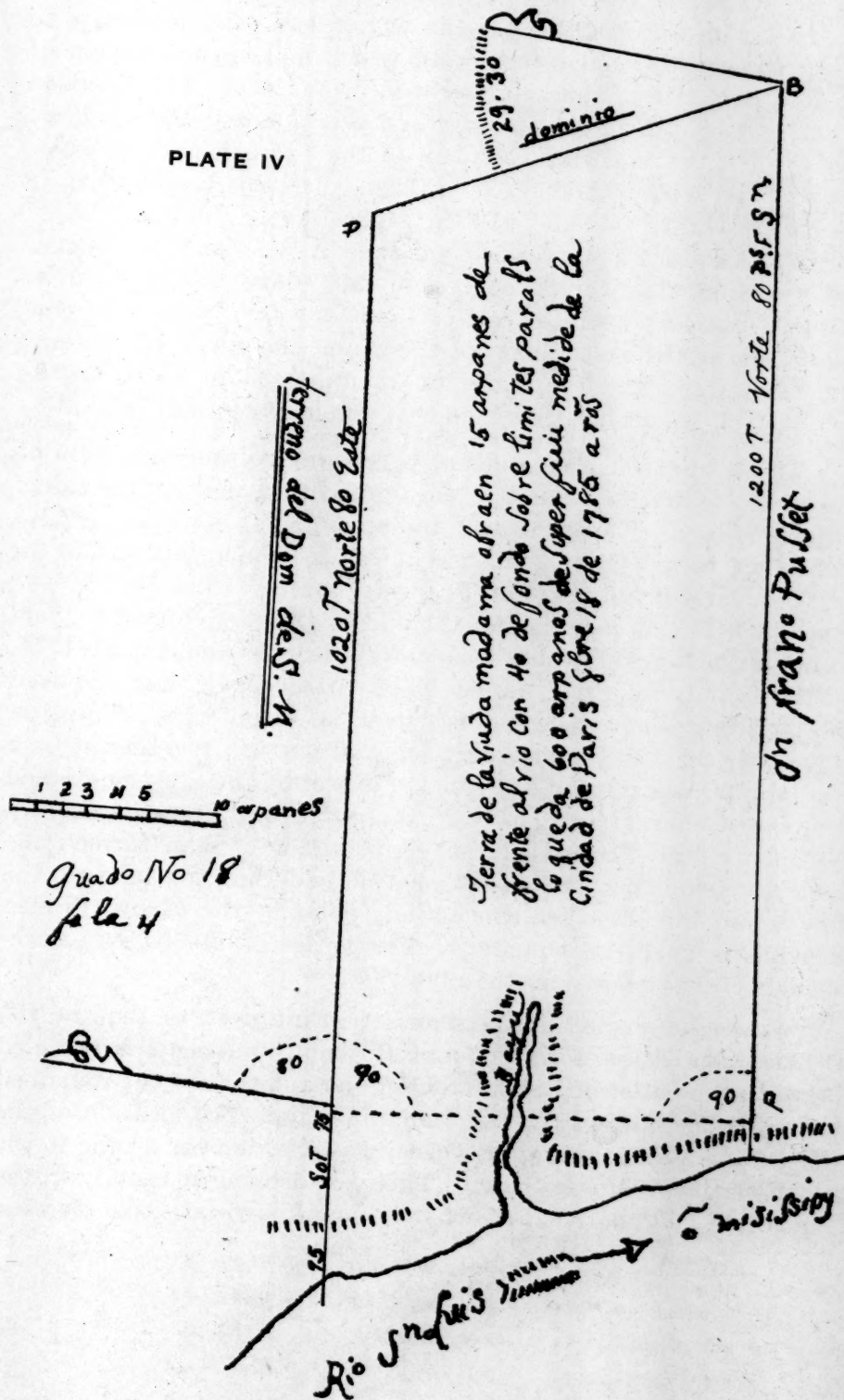
Having cited all this mass of seemingly vague evidence pertaining to the exact location of the famous Red Pole site, it becomes proper to ask what is its scientific value. The most important answer is that the site must be looked for in the neighborhood of the Scott Bluffs instead of the place where the city now stands. Whether the place can still be identified by archaeological discoveries is highly problematical, but efforts in that direction should by no means be neglected in the near future.

<sup>70</sup> *House Executive Documents*, 53 Cong., 2 Sess., III ("Report of the Secretary of War, 1893"), three maps following page 3708. For Wilton's Map see "A Manuscript Map of British Land Grants Along the Mississippi River, 1774." Original map is preserved in the Files of the Mississippi River Commission (91), Vicksburg, Miss.

<sup>71</sup> See "Simplified Sketch Map," Plate III, herein. M. Broutin, an engineer, was in New Orleans as early as 1727. Cf. Rowland and Sanders (eds.), *Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion, 1701-1743* (3 vols., Jackson, Miss., 1927-1932), II, 552.

<sup>72</sup> U. S. War Department, Corps of Engineers, *Louisiana, Zachary Quadrangle* (Mississippi River Commission, 1939).

PLATE IV



In the meantime, the present writer has been fortunate to collect some additional information which makes the location of the Red Pole site in the neighborhood of the Scott Bluffs almost a certainty. From an old Spanish land grant, dated July 18, 1785, it is evident that a certain resident of the Spanish post of Baton Rouge, the widow Margaret O'Brien, desired to "develop a plantation within the said post in a place called Indian Village" and was granted a concession there.<sup>73</sup> A certificate of survey and a special plat were prepared in this connection by Charles Trudeau, the Surveyor-General of Louisiana for Spain. The plat clearly shows the exact limits of the grant, the water front along the Mississippi, and the outlet of an unnamed bayou.<sup>74</sup> In the certificate it is specifically stated that the land was still vacant.

Taken by itself, the evidence pertaining to the concession of the widow O'Brien does not reveal the location of the place called Indian Village. The same Old Indian Village, however, is also mentioned in a written evidence of notice which pertains to an adjacent land grant, that of Francis Pousset.<sup>75</sup> The title to the concession of this neighbor of the widow O'Brien emanates from an old British grant which was surveyed on November 20, 1776, by the Deputy-Surveyor James Eliot. After Spain had acquired the territory, all British grants had to be reconfirmed. Thus, on November 22, 1785, a new certificate of survey, together with a special plat, was issued to Francis Pousset by the aforementioned Surveyor-General of Spain.<sup>76</sup> In these official documents the all-important fact is revealed that Bayou Monte Sano formed the southern boundary of Pousset's grant and that the land of the Old Indian Village which was already taken by the widow O'Brien formed its northern boundary. The outlet of the bayou, moreover, is clearly shown on the plat.

Placing the plat of the Pousset grant next to that of the O'Brien concession, a water front of about 40 arpents is revealed between the outlet of Bayou Monte Sano and that of the unnamed bayou on the land of the Old Indian Village. The location of the Old Indian Village, in other words, was a little over a mile to the north of Bayou Monte Sano.<sup>77</sup> This would bring it exactly in the immediate neighborhood of what is now known as Lake Kernan.

<sup>73</sup> U. S. Land Office, *op. cit.*, Book A, No. 3, Part I, pp. 64-65.

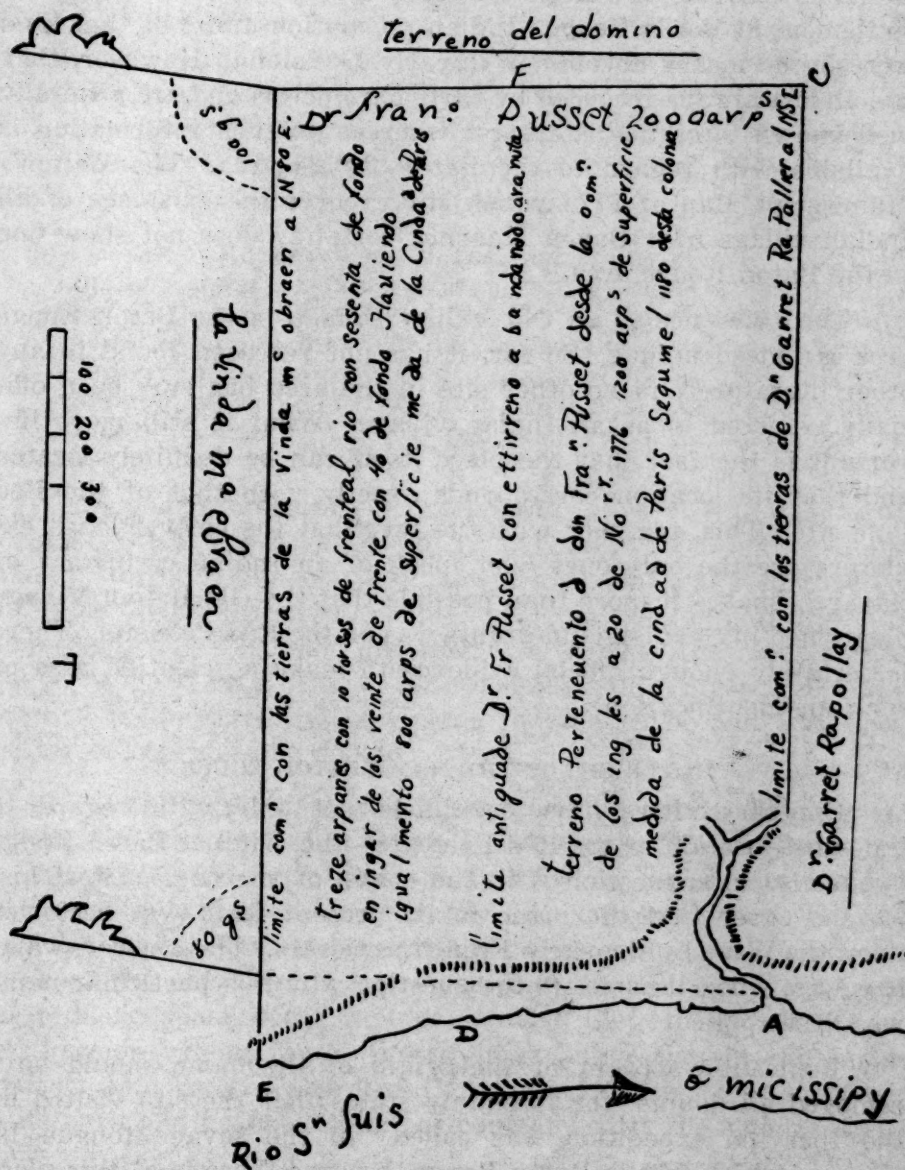
<sup>74</sup> See copy of plat, Plate IV, herein.

<sup>75</sup> U. S. Land Office, *op. cit.*, Book A, No. 3, Part I, pp. 94-96.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> See copy of plats, Plates II and V, herein.

## PLATE V



Luisiana año 1785 distrito del fuerte de Baton Rouge  
Margenvzguierda del Río.

There is no absolute certainty, of course, that the place known as the Old Indian Village was actually the famous Red Pole site. The village may have been established later on by a group of Indians who sought refuge in the neighborhood of the French settlement at Baton Rouge. Indian population drifts of that kind were by no means uncommon in early Louisiana. However, they are almost always recorded by early chroniclers and are generally well known to ethno-historians; whereas no such information is available with regard to the Baton Rouge area. The Wilton's Manuscript Map of 1774 which still records the existence of an Indian village near Bayou Manchac certainly does not show one in the Baton Rouge area.<sup>78</sup>

The reference to an Old Indian Village in the Baton Rouge area is indeed unique. So far, it has not yet been found in any other literature and no other site in the area has ever been officially referred to as an Indian village. What is still more important is the fact that the place itself can be definitely located and that its location corresponds exactly with that of the Red Pole site. This, together with the fact that the early French explorers are the only ones who speak of an Indian occupancy of the area, makes it more than possible that the Old Indian Village mentioned in Spanish land grants was on the Red Pole site. There is certainly enough official evidence to make a scientific case of such an identification.

#### THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME BATON ROUGE

Contrary views have been held not only with regard to the exact location of the Red Pole site—the original Baton Rouge—but also in connection with the origin of the name. Most historians agree that the name in its present form was bestowed upon the place by the early French explorers. The answers vary, however, when it comes to the question why this particular name was first applied.

Penicaut's account of the origin of the name should have removed all doubts, for it plainly states that the site visited by the Iberville expedition was called "in the savage tongue Istrouma, which means Baton Rouge, because there is at this place a pole painted red".<sup>79</sup> The place, in other words, was already dis-

<sup>78</sup> Mississippi River Commission, "A Manuscript Map of British Land Grants Along the Mississippi River, 1774" (M.R.C., 91).

<sup>79</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, V, 395

tinguished by the Indians as that of the Red Pole, and the French merely perpetuated this tradition by translating the original name into their own language.

The writings of Penicaut, unfortunately, rested in the French archives, unknown or forgotten, until the end of the 19th Century when they were finally published by Pierre Margry.<sup>80</sup> In the meantime, the desire to explain the origin of the name was not left unfulfilled. Writing his well-known *Histoire de la Louisiane* fifty-nine years after the discovery of the Red Pole site, Du Pratz gives the following explanation:

Baton Rouge is also to the east of the river, . . . There one may see the famous cypress out of which a boat builder wished to make two piroques, the one of sixteen tons and the other of fourteen. As the cypress is a red wood, one of the first explorers took it into his head to say that this tree would make a beautiful baton; hence it was called Baton Rouge; its height has not yet been measured; it is lost to view.<sup>81</sup>

This somewhat fanciful explanation gave rise to the "tree theory" which was perpetuated by Gayarré, a well-known Louisiana historian.<sup>82</sup> As soon as Penicaut's account was rediscovered the "pole theory" came into being, and from then on both theories flourished. The academic question was whether the name Baton Rouge referred originally to an unusually tall cypress tree or to the Red Pole erected by the Houma Indians. It became a subject matter of considerable debate.

In 1917 the problem was finally resolved by Dr. William O. Scroggs of the Louisiana State University.<sup>83</sup> The tree theory, as this scholar so aptly points out, is by no means convincing. If there ever was such an unusually tall cypress at the Red Pole site, it certainly did not impress the early explorers. The chroniclers of the Iberville do not make any mention of it, whereas the reddened pole of the Indians received their fullest attention. Furthermore, there is not the slightest suggestion in the early writings that the red pole itself was an old cypress tree stripped of its bark and branches. On the contrary, it is the strictly arti-

<sup>80</sup> In 1887. See also, B. F. French (ed.), *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, I (Second Series: New York, 1869) 85-162.

<sup>81</sup> Le Page du Pratz, *op. cit.*, II, 267.

<sup>82</sup> Charles Etienne Arthur Gayarré, *Louisiana: Its History as a French Colony* (Third Series of Lectures: New York, 1852), 127.

<sup>83</sup> Scroggs, *loc. cit.*, I, 20-24.

ficial structure of the pole that is emphasized. Iberville actually calls it a "maypole".<sup>84</sup> It is quite possible; of course, that Du Pratz observed a large cypress in the area. He resided in the colony from 1718 to 1734, mostly in the Natchez district, and in his official capacity as the Director of the Public Plantations had an excellent opportunity to study the country. While he does not seem to have visited the French plantation at Baton Rouge, he certainly knew about it and passed it several times on his travels to and from the Natchez district. In his description of the colony he dwells indeed a second time on the remarkable size of the cypress tree at Baton Rouge.<sup>85</sup> From the inhabitants of the place he may actually have heard the story which he reports about the origin of the name. Thus, not knowing Penicaut's account, he was probably repeating a simple folk-conjecture.

Folk-conjectures about the origin of the name Baton Rouge are by no means lacking. One of them, as already stated, derives the name from a reddened flagstaff of the Spanish fort.<sup>86</sup> Another one, which was told by a local resident as late as 1917, reads as follows:

When I was a little boy the old people used to tell us that the way Baton Rouge got its name was because it was the scene of a treaty meeting between the French and the Choctaw Indians, who, when making peace, instead of burying the tomahawk, as was the custom of the other tribes, buried a red stick—the red symbolizing blood—and they used to point out the place where the red stick was supposed to have been buried, viz., the bluff at the confluence of the bayou and the river, just a short distance north of the old barracks where the university is now located.<sup>87</sup>

Modern scholars, having access to Penicaut's account, do not have to take these folk-conjectures seriously. They have generally accepted Penicaut's interpretation, but are still at variance as to the exact linguistic derivation of the original name *Istrouma*. Dr. Scroggs takes the word to be a direct corruption of the Choctaw terms *iti humma*, "red pole".<sup>88</sup> Dr. William A. Read, on the other hand, states that it arose partly through a

<sup>84</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 173.

<sup>85</sup> Le Page du Pratz, *op. cit.*, II, 31.

<sup>86</sup> Sparks, *op. cit.*, 390.

<sup>87</sup> Milledge L. Bonham, Jr., "The First Council of the American City of Baton Rouge," in *Proceedings of the Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge*, I (August, 1917), 38 (letter of Col. James M. Morgan).

<sup>88</sup> Scroggs, *loc. cit.*, I, 20-24.

confusion of Choctaw *iti humma* with Choctaw *isht hummachi*, "red dye", and partly through the influence of the use and two-fold pronunciation of the final r-sound in French.<sup>89</sup>

Linguistic experts find little or no difficulty in accepting the second unit of the compound *istrouma* as a true Indian source, for it represents a common French spelling of *humma* or *homma*, a widely used Choctaw adjective signifying red. The French disregard of the *h* can readily be understood in this case, and the conclusion is inevitable that Penicaut's *rouge* was a direct translation of the Choctaw *humma*.

The real difficulty of accepting the compound *istrouma* as a true Indian source arises from an analysis of *istr*, its first unit. For one thing, the Choctaw dialect has no r-sound; for another, it does not tolerate the consonant group *st*.<sup>90</sup> These linguistic considerations have led scholars to doubt the correctness of the spelling as it is found in the various transcriptions of the original manuscript. A recheck in the French archives proved, however, that Penicaut himself spelled the word exactly the same way.<sup>91</sup>

Dr. William A. Read, therefore, concludes that Penicaut simply confused *iti humma* with *isht hummachi* and formed a new compound by blending *isht* with *humma*. Finally, in blending these terms Penicaut is believed to have replaced the difficult *sht* by *str*, with the r-sound serving as a connecting link.<sup>92</sup>

Whatever Penicaut's reasons may have been in forming the compound *istrouma*, it should be kept in mind that he could scarcely help confusing Indian expressions and changing them. He was surrounded by a multiplicity of strange dialects and had to depend entirely on his own ear for a study of them. The surprising fact is that he, as a simple ship's carpenter, had the ability at all to acquire native vocabularies and serve as an interpreter. As is well known, he even undertook to instruct the Indians in French.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>89</sup> William A. Read, "Istrouma," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XIV (1931), 514.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 503-515.

<sup>91</sup> "Clear Reference to Word 'Istrouma' Found by Bonham, Former L. S. U. Professor, During Research in Paris," in *Baton Rouge State-Times*, April 10, 1930. (Original document is marked "Fond Francais, 14613").

<sup>92</sup> Read, *loc. cit.*, XIV, 514.

<sup>93</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, V, 470.

## THE HOUMA INDIANS

Since these Indians are primarily responsible for the origin of the name Baton Rouge it becomes imperative to ask who they were, where did they originally come from, and what culture did they possess. It is important, above all, to ascertain the particular tribal custom and belief, as well as the ritual symbols, that were connected with the erection of the Red Pole.

Their name is plainly Choctaw, a principal Muskogean dialect; it signifies "red" and is readily translatable into this particular dialect. From a surviving member of the tribe Dr. John R. Swanton has been able to collect about eighty other words all of which differ little from their Choctaw equivalents.<sup>94</sup> There is no doubt, therefore, that the Houma were a Choctaw-speaking remnant group of the great Muskogean family which is known to have entered the southeastern United States long before the coming of the earliest Spaniards.

Their relationship with the great Muskogean family is no particular surprise. There were at least some fifty historic tribal groups in the Southeast who spoke Muskogean dialects. These groups were diffused over the entire area as far north as the Ohio River and eastward to the Atlantic, including parts of South Carolina and Florida. The largest, such as the Creeks, Chickasaw, and Choctaw, lived in the central section of this area; but in the Lower Mississippi Valley and the Gulf region there were many smaller groups.<sup>95</sup>

Linguistic considerations also suggest the possibility that the Houma were once a part of the Chakchiuma. The name of this tribal group means "red crawfish", while that of the Houma merely signifies red. It is believed, therefore, that the term *houma* is an abbreviation of *chakchiuma* and was originally used to distinguish the Houma Indians from their former tribal relatives.<sup>96</sup> The chroniclers of the Iberville expedition, interestingly enough, give the name of a certain tribe which had destroyed the village of the Tangipahoa sometimes as Houma and sometimes as Chouchouma, although it is quite evident that they had the Houma Indians in mind.<sup>97</sup> Even more interesting in this con-

<sup>94</sup> John R. Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 43: Washington, D. C., 1911), 28-29.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, Map facing title page.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

nection is the statement made by Dumont, a French officer, that the crawfish was the war emblem of the Houma.<sup>98</sup> Thus, the former relationship of the Houma with the Chakchiuma cannot be precluded, even though in historic times they were two distinct tribal groups.

The Chakchiuma had their historic home near the junction of the Yazoo and Yalobusha Rivers, in what is now the State of Mississippi. Adair, an English trader, says of them that they were forced to settle in a narrow territory between the Chickasaw and Choctaw and that the lower course of the Tallahatchie River, a large eastern affluent of the Yazoo, was known as the Chokchuma River because they had settled there.<sup>99</sup> He further indicates that they were related to the Choctaw and Chickasaw and that they had come with them from a legendary country west of the Mississippi. Choctaw testimonies recorded by Mr. H. B. Cushman bear out this relationship.

Migration legends of Muskogean-speaking tribes indicating movements from a country far toward the setting sun are both numerous and persistent in native testimony. Leaving aside all conjectural theories that have been made by ethno-historians with regard to the location of this legendary country, there is good reason to believe that it was west of the Mississippi and that some tribes at least came down the Red River. More important in the present connection is one tradition which clearly states that an early undifferentiated Choctaw-Chickasaw-Chakchiuma group crossed the Mississippi in the wake of another Muskogean immigration into the Southeast Culture Area.<sup>100</sup>

After the entry of the various Muskogean-speaking peoples into the Southeast there was an intensified moving about, and many tribal groups wandered off in search for a habitat of their own. This fact is clearly revealed in Swanton's tribal histories of the area.<sup>101</sup> It was largely the result of a lack of geographical barriers, contacts with non-Muskogean peoples, and internal warfare. The Chakchiuma, however, did not have much of a chance. As previously stated, they were forced to settle between their traditional neighbors, the Choctaw and Chickasaw, and,

<sup>98</sup> Louis Francois Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *Memoires Historiques sur la Louisiane* (2 vols., edited by Le Mascrier: Paris, 1753), I, 184.

<sup>99</sup> James Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (London, 1775), 66, 352.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> John R. Swanton, "Southeastern Indians of History," in *Conference on Southern Prehistory* (National Research Council: Washington, D. C., 1932), 5-20.

being a warlike people, they were constantly on the warpath. A bitter struggle took place between them and the combined forces of their former relatives until they were finally absorbed by the Chickasaw.<sup>102</sup> Under such circumstances, then, it is no wonder that the Houma should have left them.

The rebellious nature of the Chakchiuma was felt not only by the Choctaw and Chickasaw, but also by the white man. In 1540 De Soto was compelled to use half of his men to make war on them. His chroniclers do not give a tribal name, but they furnish specific names for the territory which can easily be recognized. The Chakchiuma, in fact, are one of the few tribal groups that can readily be identified in the narratives of the De Soto expedition. The Elvas narrative, for example, speaks of a province called "Sacquechuma", while Ranjel uses the name "Sacchuma".<sup>103</sup> Mention is also made of a town. The former relatives of the Houma Indians, in other words, were already well established in their historic seats when the Spaniards arrived.

Whether the Houma left them in the wake of these early conflicts with the Spaniards or whether they had already departed remains highly conjectural. But that as it may, it is certain that they were already in Louisiana when the French first appeared on the scene. In 1682, when La Salle and Tonti first descended the Mississippi, they heard of their existence but did not stop to visit them. However, they found a village, that of the Tangipahoa, which had been plundered and burned by the Houma and, thus, became acquainted with the warlike nature of this tribal group.<sup>104</sup> Four years later, Tonti called them "the bravest savages of the river" and took special care to make an alliance with them.<sup>105</sup>

On March 20, 1699, three days after the discovery of their Red Pole site in the Baton Rouge bluff-locality, their principal village was visited by the Iberville expedition. It was situated on the higher bluff lands near the present Mississippi-Louisiana State boundary. Owing to its position near a big bend on the east bank of the Mississippi, it had two landing places, one below and another above the bend. Its inland distance from the lower

<sup>102</sup> Henry S. Halbert, "The Small Indian Tribes of Mississippi," in *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* (Oxford, Miss., 1902), V, 302-308.

<sup>103</sup> Edward Gaylord Bourne (ed.), *Narratives of the Career of Hernando De Soto* (2 vols., Trail Makers Series: New York, 1904), I, 101, 102; II, 132, 133.

<sup>104</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, I, 563, 604.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 556.

landing place is given as two and a half leagues, while that from the upper one is said to have been one league less.<sup>106</sup> In either case the inland journey was found very difficult by the French. Father Du Ru, one of the early visitors, exclaimed: "what hills to climb, brooks to cross, and thickets to penetrate!"<sup>107</sup>

The next year, on March 4, Iberville visited the village a second time.<sup>108</sup> He had tried to establish peace between the Houma and the Bayougoula, their southern neighbors who at that time had their principal village on the west bank of the Mississippi, near Bayou La Fourche, at a place which still bears their name. During his absence war had broken out again, and the Houma had killed and captured a number of Bayougoula. It took a great deal of French diplomacy to renew the peace and liberate the prisoners. The aforementioned Father Du Ru, who accompanied Iberville on this second visit, left a special servant among the Houma to build a church in their village.<sup>109</sup>

That the Houma were still a warlike people is further emphasized by Father Gravier who visited their village on November 25, 1700, and who has left us one of the best accounts of their ways of living. In his writings he points out that the neighboring tribes were afraid of them, but at the same time he would have the reader believe that the Houma were very kind to war captives.<sup>110</sup> He also tells a story about the death of a former amazon, a woman chief, who in person had led several war parties.<sup>111</sup>

As to their military strength only a general idea can be obtained. The population figures cited by the French explorers and missionaries are so fragmentary and conflicting that it is almost impossible to draw a satisfactory conclusion. Iberville's journal, pertaining to the year 1699, lists 140 cabins and 350 men.<sup>112</sup> These figures are quite in accord with Dr. Swanton's conclusion that on an average two and a half warriors should be allowed to one cabin. Using a second conclusion reached by the same expert in his estimations of the aboriginal population of the Lower Mississippi Valley: namely, that one warrior should be allowed to

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 174. See also, Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), *Jesuit Relations* (73 vols., Cleveland, 1900), LXV, 145 ff.

<sup>107</sup> Ruth Lapham Butler (ed.), *Journal of Paul Du Ru* (Chicago, 1934), 26.

<sup>108</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 418.

<sup>109</sup> Ruth Lapham Butler, *op. cit.*, 45.

<sup>110</sup> Thwaites, *op. cit.*, LXV, 151, 152.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, LXV, 144.

<sup>112</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 177.

every three and a half of the population, a total figure of 1,225 would be a proper estimate of the Houma population.<sup>113</sup> It is not at all improbable that this figure is correct, although the ship's log of the Iberville expedition lists from 600 to 700 only.<sup>114</sup>

An examination of later figures reveals a rapid decline. Iberville found that half of the population had been destroyed within a single year by a disease which he called "abdominal flux".<sup>115</sup> Thus, Father Gravier who stopped at the village after Iberville's second visit reports only 70 cabins.<sup>116</sup> After that they were no longer feared by their neighbors. In fact, they were not even in a position to defend their own territory; for in 1706 their village was taken over by their northern neighbors, the Tunica Indians, who had left their former home on the Yazoo River and migrated southward. La Harpe, an early explorer of the Red River Valley, states that the Houma received the Tunica trustingly but were subsequently massacred by them.<sup>117</sup> Penicaut, whose chronology is frequently erroneous, places the Tunica invasion in the year 1709 and represents it as a mere occupancy of the Houma village after its inhabitants had left.<sup>118</sup>

Whatever the real nature of the Tunica invasion may have been, the facts are that the Houma remnants withdrew southward and that the Tunica took over their village. Whether the occupants of the Red Pole site in the Baton Rouge bluff-locality managed to remain a little longer or whether the Tunica drove them away also is not known. As far as the historic occupancy of the Louisiana bluffs by the Houma Indians is concerned, the available source material definitely indicates that it had come to an end by the year 1706. After the Tunica had driven them out of this region, they left for the bottom lands further down the Mississippi and gradually drifted to the seacoast, their present home.

Before tracing their subsequent history it becomes proper to give a brief description of their cultural activities, that is, their ways of living. Generally speaking, there is nothing in the culture of this tribal group that sets them apart from their Musk-

<sup>113</sup> Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico*, 43.

<sup>114</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 270.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 418.

<sup>116</sup> Thwaites, *op. cit.*, LXV, 147 ff.

<sup>117</sup> Bénard de la Harpe, *Journal Historique de L'Etablissement des Français a la Louisiane* (Nouvelle-Orleans and Paris, 1831), 100.

<sup>118</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, V, 488.

hogeans neighbors. Like most Indians of the Southeastern Culture Area, they depended on agriculture, hunting, and fishing for a livelihood. Early explorers clearly state that the Houma were thoroughly at home in a permanent village surrounded by patches of cornfields.<sup>119</sup> In the village was a temple and an open square or plaza. Mounds are not mentioned. The houses consisted of simple wooden frames thatched with grass or leaves. Clay pots and baskets served as receptacles. Tools and other implements were made of wood, shell, stone, and bone. In the matter of dress the Houma used both skins and bark fibres.

Their social life was simple. There were no civil, military, and religious hierarchies. Leadership was vested in a chief, but on the whole there was an unpretentious village-life organization. Whether the Houma had a regular clan system is not known. There is no doubt, however, that families lived together in some sort of kinship group and that the solidarity of such groups, as well as that of the tribe as a whole, was perpetuated by special symbols, ceremonies, formalized rules, and ritual techniques.

An important ritual technique was the dance which was usually performed at night by the light of special torches; it was assisted by such rhythm-producing instruments as the drum, the rattle, and two sticks that were beaten together at regular intervals. In the case of a deceased chief, moreover, a big funeral ceremony was held, consisting of a long series of special rites. One of the outstanding customs of this ceremony was the drinking of the famous black drink, a special liquid made of the leaves of a certain holly, the *Ilex vomitoria*. Formalized rules and ritual techniques were also followed in the complex "chunkey" game, a game common to all southern Indians, which was played by the young men in the public square.

In warfare, on the other hand, there was little concern about any special rules to which the parties agreed in advance. Usually all young men became warriors. The fighting was done with bows and arrows and special war clubs. Generally, no holds were barred. The symbolic situation of warfare, interestingly enough, was characterized by the use of the red crawfish as an emblem. This particular symbol may also have had some totemic significance, but there is no definite indication in the ethnographic source material of the existence of a totemic system. Peace mak-

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 174-177. See also, Thwaites, *op. cit.*, LXV, 145-153.

ing was accompanied by smoking the calumet or peace pipe, for the French explorers clearly state that they were made by the Houma with this ceremonial object. The possibility that the Houma practiced the custom of adopting war captives into their tribe is suggested by Gravier who speaks of the kind treatment accorded to such captives.

Organized beliefs and duties with regard to the supernatural were also present. According to Father Gravier, the Houma had a special temple, adorned with grotesque figures, in which an old man kept a constant sacred fire. Whether they worshipped a solar deity whose manifestations were supposed to be revealed in this sacred fire is not stated; but since the worship of the sun was a regular practice among their neighbors, it is possible that they shared the same belief. Be that as it may, it is definitely reported that the Houma recognized a Supreme Being, a Spirit Above, who had made all things and whom they worshipped in a special temple containing a sacred fire.

Other tribal customs, some of which were decried as evil or whimsical by the French missionaries, are: (a) exposing the dead on special platforms before depositing the bones; (b) putting away with the deceased all of the former possessions; (c) medicine men treating their patients by sucking the wounds; (d) burning the cabin of a deceased chief; (e) conjuring the weather; (f) keeping chickens obtained from the white man without eating them; (g) wailing on the part of the women when their husbands departed for hunting; (h) offering tobacco to the spirits and even to the Christian Cross; (i) head deformation, tattooing, body painting, and teeth blackening as a means of personal enhancement; (k) constant offering of gifts to visitors.

It is not essential in the present paper to ask how the Houma Indians acquired these various customs, except in so far as these customs offer evidence with regard to the origin of Istrouma or the Red Pole site. Some of their practices, no doubt, were taken over from various neighbors and, thus, will prove to have considerable historical depth. Others may merely have been the result of territorial provincialism. It is strange, however, that such an important ritual technique as the erection of a reddened pole was not observed in the principal village of these Indians. This particular custom is mentioned only in connection with the Baton Rouge bluff-locality and no clear symbolic background is given for the reason of its existence.

In a description of the former relatives of the Houma, however, the following information is set forth with regard to the erection of a sacred pole:

The Chocchumas built many forts in this territory, several of which were in Oktibbeha County. In the center of their forts they erected tall poles, on which they suspended scalps, beads, bones, and other savage paraphernalia. When the wind blew through these trophies it made a peculiar noise, which their prophets interpreted as the voice of the Great Spirit, informing them that some Choctaw or Chickasaw was killing a Chocchuma.<sup>120</sup>

The pole, in other words, symbolized not only the tribal and military organization of the Chakchiuma, but was also associated with the supernatural.

There is no evidence, of course, to show that the pole erected by the Houma on the famous Red Pole site served a similar purpose. The description of the pole reveals an outstanding similarity, however; according to Iberville, it was a "reddened may-pole without branches, with several heads of fish and bears attached in sacrifice."<sup>121</sup> Thus, the artificial structure and sacred purpose of the pole is clearly indicated. The same characteristics, moreover, are stressed by the log book of the *Marin* which speaks of the pole as "thirty feet high, on which were heads of fish".<sup>122</sup>

The attachment of fish bones is particularly significant in view of the apparent fact that the red crawfish was the war emblem of the Houma Indians, as well as their former tribal name. It is significant also in this connection that the pole was reddened because their historic tribal name signified this particular color. Anointing the pole in this manner, then, merely completed the process of emblemization.

Due to the lack of direct evidence, some ethno-historians may be unwilling to see any particular significance in the pole itself. They may merely regard it as a convenient object on which sacrificial offerings were placed and may conclude that the offerings in question were those of the first-kill. It is true that offerings of this type were not uncommon among the Indians of the Southeastern Culture Area. However, the use of a tall, reddened pole for such a purpose is not recorded anywhere in

<sup>120</sup> Halbert, *loc. cit.*, V, 302-303.

<sup>121</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 173.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 263.

the respective literature. The only reference to the use of sacrificial posts is contained in Tonti's statement that the Taensa Indians, a tribal group of the Lower Mississippi Valley, had "fixed spikes, on which they place the heads of their enemies whom they sacrifice to the sun."<sup>123</sup>

A significant use of a sacred pole, on the other hand, is cited in the migration legends of the Muskogean tribes. The pole is said to have been carried along on tribal marches and to have exerted a mysterious power in directing the geographical movements of the tribe and in selecting a final place for settlement.<sup>124</sup> In other words, it symbolized not only the tribal unity of the people but also the particular place which they considered their home and which they were willing to defend against encroaching neighbors. Its use in this sense may well have survived among the Chakchiuma who, as previously stated, erected tall poles in the center of their strongholds. It may also have survived in the same sense at the Red Pole site which represented the southernmost outpost of the Houma territory.

Thus, Penicaut's account which states that the pole served as a boundary mark seems to contain a certain truth. It should be accepted with caution, however, for it betrays a European concept of boundaries. The use of poles for boundary marks is generally unknown among American Indians; instead, they used rivers, mountain ridges, and other important physiographical features. Hence, the statement in the log book of the *Marin* that the little river served as the boundary mark appears to be more correct. But even this statement should be accepted with caution, because of the smallness of the river. If there was a distinct boundary at all between the territories of the Houma and the Bayougoula, the bluffs themselves provided a most imposing physiographical mark.

Summing up, then, the purpose and possible uses of the red pole at the original Baton Rouge site, it is apparent from circumstantial evidence that we are dealing with an ancient Muskogean tradition: a ritual technique symbolizing the tribal unity of the people and the territory occupied by them. Furthermore, it is not at all impossible that the practice of erecting a reddened

<sup>123</sup> B. F. French (ed.), "Memoir of the Sieur de la Tonti," in *Historical Collections of Louisiana* (New York and Philadelphia, 1846), I, 61.

<sup>124</sup> John R. Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 103: Washington, D. C., 1931), 10, 11, 12, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33.

pole and attaching fish bones to it was connected with a symbolic system known as totemism. The red crawfish, which is reported to have been their war emblem and their former name, may well have been the totemic animal of the Houma Indians, that is, a sacred animal to which they felt related. The use of the red pole as a mere sacrificial post, on the other hand, is not convincing. The same is true of the statement that it was merely a boundary mark.

Whatever its survival value may have been in the tribal existence of the Houma Indians, the ritual technique of erecting a reddened pole must have fallen into disuse shortly after it was first observed by the French explorers. It is never recorded again. The Houma, however, are still with us; and, in spite of their mixture with Negroes and whites, they still prefer to be called Indians. After the Tunica had driven them out of the blufflands, their historic home, they first settled on Bayou St. John, near New Orleans.<sup>125</sup> A few years later they moved to the southern part of what is now Ascension Parish where they established two villages, a small one and a larger one. Remnants of all sorts of tribes joined them, including Bayougoula, Acolapissa, Biloxi, Chitimacha, Washa, and Chawasha Indians. They continued to live in this particular area until 1776. Then, they gradually drifted to their present home, the seacoast of Terrebonne and La Fourche parishes. In April 1917 they were visited by Dr. Swanton who reports that they comprised about 880 people living in 140 houses and that:

They occupy six settlements on as many bayous, and are principally engaged in hunting the otter, mink, and such other animals as occur in their country, and in fishing and gathering. During the sugar season some of them work on the plantations, especially at crushing, and some cattle are raised, particularly by Bob Verret, the leading man among them.<sup>126</sup>

It is said that on their way to their present home they made an attempt to establish themselves near what is now the city of Houma, but that they were driven out of this area by the whites.<sup>127</sup> Be that as it may, the foregoing city in southwestern Louisiana still bears their tribal name, whereas their former home in the northeastern part of the State is now referred to as the Tunica Hills.

<sup>125</sup> Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico*, 289-290.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

## THE EARLY FRENCH SETTLEMENT

Almost fifteen years after the Houma had left their bluff-lands the French established themselves in the Baton Rouge area. The exact date of the first settlement is not yet known, and may never be found out due to the lack of evidence. It is certain, however, that some beginnings were made during the year 1721.

The late start of the settlement is intimately connected with the slow development of the French colony of Louisiana and the various colonization schemes that were set forth by different commercial establishments. It cannot be understood, therefore, without taking into consideration the colonial enterprise as a whole. This is true also of the subsequent development of the Baton Rouge settlement under the French. The very survival of the settlement depended upon the various colonial policies.

Although Bienville, the great colonizer, had been appointed governor of the new colony as early as 1701, commercially French Louisiana was still nonexistent for many years. Only military posts were maintained, and even they had to be provided with necessities that were brought over from Saint-Dominique, the French establishment in the Carribean. Thus, whenever a ship failed to return, a terrible state of famine is said to have developed.<sup>128</sup>

In 1712 the royal government conceded the colony to a commercial establishment headed by Antoine Crozat, and sent La Mothe-Cadillac there as governor.<sup>129</sup> Crozat's company, however, was primarily interested in establishing a trading post among the Indians. For this purpose it selected a place near what is now Natchez, Mississippi, for the landing at Natchez was at that time a convenient stopping place for parties ascending and descending the great river. Besides, there was already a steady advance of English traders toward that point of the valley. In the Baton Rouge bluff-locality, on the other hand, there were no longer any Indians to trade with.

The Natchez trading post did not flourish.<sup>130</sup> Native disturbances, instigated in part by English traders, soon arose and the

<sup>128</sup> Pierre Heinrich, *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes, 1717-1731* (Paris, 1908), XIV, 173. See also, Baron Marc de Villiers du Terrage, *Les Dernières Années de la Louisiane Française* (Paris, 1903), 7.

<sup>129</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, V, 506. See also, Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana (trans.), "Letters of Father Francois le Maire, 1714-1717," (Baton Rouge, 1937-1938), a typewritten copy, 25-27.

<sup>130</sup> Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico*, 193.

storehouse which the company had set up in the village of the Natchez Indians was plundered. There was also bad management on the part of the French governor who is said to have refused smoking the peace pipe with the natives. These events led to what is generally referred to as the First Natchez War of 1716, a conflict during which Bienville skilfully suppressed the revolt. After peace had been established, the French continued to center their interest at Natchez and built a fort on the lofty bluffs near the landing place to protect the colony against both the Indians and the English. Antedating the foundation of New Orleans by about two years, this military post was favored by quite a few colonial officials as the future capital of the colony.

A new colonization scheme, however, was in the making. In 1717 the entire colony was granted to a commercial establishment headed by John Law.<sup>131</sup> Known as the Western or Mississippi Company, this establishment was actually made the proprietor for a period of 25 years. Its most-publicized activity resulted in a well-known fiasco, the famous "Mississippi Bubble," during which many immigrants became the victims of an ill-planned attempt at settlement. Many concessions, however, were granted along the Mississippi River, and the idea of bringing European settlers to the shores of Louisiana was not given up.

The first installment of colonists was soon to land at Biloxi, waiting there for means of transportation to the interior. On August 29, 1718, over six hundred are said to have arrived.<sup>132</sup> Two hundred were sent to the country of the Illinois, but the others had to wait because of the lack of flat boats and other necessities. A dismal fate, including famine and diseases, befell the latter. One third of the headmen alone is said to have perished, and for a while it seemed as if the proposed plan to form plantations on the banks of the Mississippi was doomed to failure even though new concession-holders continued to arrive.<sup>133</sup>

In 1719, therefore, the Western Company was reorganized. The Company of the East Indies was united to it by means of a special decree and the new establishment became henceforth known as the Company of the Indies.<sup>134</sup> Bienville was made gov-

<sup>131</sup> Heinrich, *op. cit.*, 2.

<sup>132</sup> Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana (trans.), "Memoire of Charles Le Gac, 1718-1721" (Baton Rouge, 1937-1938), a typewritten copy, 8.

<sup>133</sup> Heinrich, *op. cit.*, 28. See also, De la Harpe, *op. cit.*, 140.

<sup>134</sup> De la Harpe, *op. cit.*, 173.

ernor again. The new company also settled the administrative personnel and definitely ordained the limits of authority. Furthermore, by creating an office for the general supervision of the troops and militia, it established its military power on a sound foundation. On March 23, 1720, this important office was entrusted to Captain Diron D'Artaguettes, one of the D'Artaguettes who became the founders of Baton Rouge.<sup>135</sup>

Unfortunately, the biographical information concerning the D'Artaguettes is very scanty and misleading. There were three members of this family who played an important part in the early history of Louisiana, and it is difficult to ascertain which of the three was the actual founder of Baton Rouge. Some authors list two of them as brothers and one as the son of one of the brothers.<sup>136</sup> Other writers, especially those who have made full use of all the documentary material at their disposal, emphasize that all three of them were brothers.<sup>137</sup>

Whatever the truth of their family relationship may have been, the fact is that one of the D'Artaguettes received a concession at Baton Rouge. In all probability it was the oldest of the three brothers who became the grantee, for this particular member of the D'Artaguettes family had already held a position in the colony from 1708 to 1710 as Commissaire-Ordonnateur. D'Artaguettes, moreover, was a leading director of the Western Company at Paris during the time when the first grants were made, and he is definitely listed among the first concession-holders.<sup>138</sup>

The exact date when the Baton Rouge grant was issued has not yet been established. Neither is the date known when the settlement got actually started. After his appointment as Inspector-General, Captain Bernard Diron D'Artaguettes, a younger brother of the grantee, was probably entrusted with the foundation of the settlement. The necessary supplies, however, do not seem to have arrived until September 16, 1720.<sup>139</sup> Even then they

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>136</sup> Peter J. Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile* (Boston and New York, 1898), 60. See also, Alcée Fortier, *Louisiana: Comprising Sketches of Parishes, Towns, Events, Institutions* (3 vols., Century Historical Association, 1914), I, 310.

<sup>137</sup> Baron Marc de Villiers du Terrage, "L'Etablissement de la Province de la Louisiane, Poème Composé de 1728 à 1742 par Dumont de Montigny," in *Journal de la Société des Americanistes de Paris*, New Series, XXIII (1931), 328, footnote. See also, Elizabeth McCann, "Penicaut and His Chronicle of Early Louisiana," in *Mid-America*, XXIII, No. 4 (October, 1941), 289, footnote 2. For the best biographical information concerning the D'Artaguettes see Sara Jones Tucker (comp.), *Indian Villages of the Illinois Country*, Part I, Atlas, in *Scientific Papers, Illinois State Museum* (Springfield, 1942) II, 6 (notes on Maps).

<sup>138</sup> Heinrich, *op. cit.*, 30.

<sup>139</sup> De la Harpe, *op. cit.*, 37, 40.

were not shipped to the place at once, for the Company of the Indies was still facing the same problem which had already confronted the Western Company; namely, the lack of flatboats and skilful men who could build them.<sup>140</sup>

Delays in transporting men and supplies to the proposed plantations on the banks of the Mississippi River were caused also by the fact that the concession-holders had great difficulties in obtaining efficient labor. The Company of the Indies, it is true, had succeeded in putting a stop to the sending of vagabonds and other undesirable subjects to Louisiana, but many of the new and better men were decimated through starvation and illness.<sup>141</sup> Thus, in March, 1721, seven groups of concession-holders, most of whom had arrived during the previous year, are said to have still remained at New Biloxi.<sup>142</sup>

Perhaps the most outstanding example of these delays is represented by the fate that befell the concession-holders of Saint Catherine who were destined for Natchez. They arrived at Biloxi in August, 1720, but had not yet been able to leave by the end of 1721.<sup>143</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, to find the following statement in an early census record:

All the concessionaries not having returned to their lands until the month of January, 1722, one ought only to count the establishments of the colony from that time.<sup>144</sup>

The Baton Rouge concession, however, did not have to wait quite that long. Like those in the neighborhood of New Orleans, it evidently got started during the spring or summer of 1721. Describing the attempts of settlement made by the Company of the Indies in the summer of that year, Pierre Heinrich, a leading expert on the activities of the company, clearly states that:

New Orleans did not yet number much over two score houses and two hundred inhabitants, but in its immediate vicinity, Tchoupitoulas, Cannes-Brûlées, Colapissas, Baton Rouge, concession-holders were beginning to settle down, giving their attention, first to the raising of cattle, while intending to undertake diversified cultures later.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Heinrich, *op. cit.*, 43, footnote 5.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 36, 40.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, footnote 5.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 41, footnote 2.

<sup>144</sup> Ditchy, *loc. cit.*, XIII, 226.

<sup>145</sup> Heinrich, *op. cit.*, 149.

By the end of the same year, moreover, Father Charlevoix visited the Baton Rouge settlement, saying mass there on New Year's Day.<sup>146</sup>

Le Gac, who from 1718 to 1721 was one of the directors of the company in Louisiana, lists Baton Rouge as a place "from which came the concession of Ms. Diron and Dartaguette, which had not been mentioned."<sup>147</sup> The notation occurs in a statement of the condition of the Province of Louisiana on the 5th of March, 1721, and would therefore indicate that the concession was not started before that date. It suggests also the aforementioned possibility that at least two of the D'Artaguette brothers, the director at Paris and the Inspector-General, were the owners.

In another place of his *Memoire* Le Gac states that the "Batons Rouges" have a large number of wild cattle, and in a marginal note he adds that they had "good soil for tobacco, as well as for silks and other crops, as at the lower river."<sup>148</sup> A more detailed description of the concession is contained in an early census record of 1722; it reads as follows:

The concession of M. Dyron (*sic*) is located at Baton Rouge forty leagues above New Orleans. The land there is very fine and good and there are many prairies. Half of this concession is burned over. They have tried to increase the fields. Last year rice and vegetables were harvested. There are in this concession thirty whites and twenty negroes and two Indian slaves.<sup>149</sup>

Curiously enough Bernard Diron D'Artaguette has little to say about the concession of his family. In the notations added by him to the foregoing census record he does not mention the place at all. Even in his *Journal*, which is primarily an official report on the conditions in the colony from 1722 to 1723, he merely describes the locality. From this description, however, the interesting fact can be gathered that the D'Artaguettes had made an attempt to name the place after themselves. An entry in Diron's *Journal*, dated December 31, 1722, clearly states:

We set out at day-break and came to Dirombourg, or Baton Rouge, which is on the right as you ascend. There are the first bluffs or steep banks which we have found on the Mississippi.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>146</sup> Pierre Francois Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et Description Generale de la Nouvelle France* (3 vols., Paris, 1744), II, 435; III, 436.

<sup>147</sup> Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana, "Memoire of Charles Le Gac, 1718-1721," p. 54.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 77, 78.

<sup>149</sup> Ditchy, *loc. cit.*, XIII, 223.

<sup>150</sup> Newton D. Mereness (ed.), *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York, 1916), 43.

Just where the D'Artaguet concession was established is not recorded anywhere. From an early map drawn in 1731 by a French engineer named Broutin it is apparent, however, that it was situated near the middle of the Reach.<sup>151</sup> In other words, the first French settlement at Baton Rouge was in the immediate vicinity of the present city, if not in its very heart; it certainly was not located on the site which in 1785 was still known to the Spaniards as the Old Indian Village, that is, near Scott Bluffs.

That the French established themselves near the middle of the Reach seems quite logical. For one thing, the blufflands in this particular section are not as high as they are farther up the river. For another, they are more extensive and in all probability contained more open grasslands. In the aforementioned census it is indeed clearly stated that there were many "prairies." Agriculturally, then, the section near the middle of the Reach was more attractive than those farther up the river.

As to the subsequent development of the French settlement at Baton Rouge we are left in the dark, except for the fact that the place is still mentioned in books and shown on maps that were published during the last years of French Louisiana.<sup>152</sup> Dumont, whose *Memoires Historiques sur la Louisiane* were published in 1753 still uses the same name for the concession, "cela Dartaguet."<sup>153</sup> Du Pratz, another contemporary historian of French Louisiana, shows the location of Baton Rouge where the city now stands, but is chiefly concerned with the origin of the name.<sup>154</sup> D'Anville's Map, which was drawn in 1731 and published in 1752, merely specifies the beginning of the blufflands.<sup>155</sup> Nowhere in these contemporary writings and cartographical recordings is there any evidence that the settlement had come to an end.

Whether any other concessions were established there is not known. Neither is there any indication in the source material about the erection of a fort. Such a military establishment is not mentioned until 1763 when the place was ceded to Great Britain and its name changed to Fort Richmond.<sup>156</sup> Even then the fort

<sup>151</sup> See "Simplified Sketch Map," Plate III, herein.

<sup>152</sup> In the Hill Memorial Library of the Louisiana State University (Louisiana Room) there is a photostat copy of a map, entitled "Carte de la Province de la Louisiane," on which the concession of D'Artaguet is shown. There is no date or author, but the original is classified as "Paris Guerre Etat Major, 70-21" and the date "1740" is added in pencil.

<sup>153</sup> Dumont de Montigny, *op. cit.*, II, 44.

<sup>154</sup> Le Page du Pratz, *op. cit.*, map facing title page.

<sup>155</sup> Copy in Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University (Louisiana Room).

<sup>156</sup> Mark Van Doren (ed.), *The Travels of William Bartram* (New York, 1940), 342.

seems to have developed from a mere field redoubt that was hurriedly thrown up on the plantation of a certain Mr. Watts. Furthermore, it is not until then that we hear of any new plantation owners, Anglo-Americans this time. On September 21, 1779, the British fort, as is well known, was captured by the Spanish governor Galvez and his American allies. Baton Rouge received its original name again and remained under Spanish rule until 1810 when it finally became an American settlement.

During the French regime there was no particular need for a military establishment in the Baton Rouge area. There were no unfriendly Indians, if there were any left at all. Neither were there any English traders. Thus, the place was not threatened by Anglo-Indian plots. Disturbances of this kind centered largely around the Natchez district. It is not surprising, therefore, that not a single one of the sixteen French companies which were distributed throughout the colony in 1722 was stationed at Baton Rouge.<sup>157</sup> Natchez, on the other hand, received a strong garrison and became the administrative center of one of the nine civil and military districts into which the colony was divided during the following year.<sup>158</sup>

The surprising thing about the Baton Rouge settlement is that it survived at all, for the entire colony was left again and again in a most critical position. By 1721 immigration had come to a stop. Because of the dismal fate that had befallen many colonists, French Louisiana lost favor in its mother country. Only a few ships were sent during the following years to bring the most necessary supplies.<sup>159</sup> Fortunately, they arrived in time to save the colony from a serious famine.

By 1725 French Louisiana had indeed become a land of confusion. Aside from the growing indifference on the part of her masters at home, it suffered from numerous internal dissensions and administrative conflicts. More than half of the 5,400 whites and 600 Negroes who comprised the colonial population in 1721 had perished.<sup>160</sup> The state of abandon in which the various concession-holders were left is almost unbelievable. It was not until

<sup>157</sup> Heloise H. Cruzat (trans.), "Louisiana in 1724: Banet's Report to the Company of the Indies," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XII (1929), 121-133.

<sup>158</sup> Heinrich, *op. cit.*, 84. See also, Mortimer H. Favrot, "Colonial Forts of Louisiana," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXVI (1943), 722-754.

<sup>159</sup> Heinrich, *op. cit.*, 47-52, 173.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 47, footnote 1, and 189.

the end of that year that they received sufficient help to carry on. From then on some progress was made, especially in the cultivation and export of tobacco.

The poor management of the colony on the part of the Company of the Indies continued.<sup>161</sup> To mend some of the ills, the capital was transferred to New Orleans in 1721 and the administration of the colony was placed into the hands of special Commissioners. Two years later the company took the administration over again. This time it actually sacrificed the commercial progress of the colony in favor of slave trading with the Antilles and even reduced the military establishments. Some progress was made under the governorship of Perrier, 1727-1729, as a result of the introduction of new crops such as rice, indigo, cotton, and even coffee; but the economic development of the colony was severely compromised by the revolt of the Natchez in 1729 which nearly caused a panic.<sup>162</sup>

In 1731 the management of the Company of the Indies came to an end. The royal government took the colonial administration over again, and the following year it appointed Bienville as governor for the third time.<sup>163</sup> There were some improvements, especially in the Forties and Fifties; but, as a result of the Seven Years War in Europe, France gradually lost her foothold in Louisiana. In 1763, at the close of this war, the colony became a gift to Spain. The lands east of the Mississippi, with the exception of New Orleans, were taken over by England. Thus, Baton Rouge became a British post and, as previously stated, received the name Fort Richmond.

The subsequent history of the place, that is, its development into a Spanish town and the final growth of this town into an American city, is so vast a subject matter and so complicated that it cannot be adequately treated in a brief paper. Besides, it is not the purpose of the writer of this article to attempt such a task.

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-189.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 190 ff.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 249 ff.

CONCLUSIONS<sup>164</sup>

Brief as the foregoing analysis of the various data pertaining to the origin and early settlement of Baton Rouge has been, the following points have become substantially clear:

Firstly, the fundamental characteristics of the terrestrial environment, including above all the bluffs, the straight section of the Mississippi River, the south-eastward slope of the land, and the general drainage pattern, were essentially the same at the beginning of the historic period as they are now. This is equally true of the climatic and weather conditions. Only the surface of the land had a different appearance, for it consisted of a semi-wooded prairie which was interrupted here and there by low swampy grounds. Wild plant and animal life, moreover, was very abundant.

Secondly, the region was already inhabited during prehistoric times, although there is no trace or suggestion of any culture being over one thousand years old. Archaeological remains of Mound Builders, who are said to have first entered the Lower Mississippi Valley about 900 A.D., furnish the most convincing proof of this prehistoric occupation and reveal the same two mound-building patterns that occur throughout the Eastern United States.

Thirdly, the first exploration of the Baton Rouge bluff-locality by the white man dates back to March 17, 1699, when the French explorer Iberville and his men ascended the Mississippi. Earlier explorers, both French and Spaniards, are known to have passed the place, but the records of their expeditions do not mention it. The particular site visited by Iberville was occupied by a group of historic Indians, the Houma, who had erected a reddened pole there. These Indians, moreover, had already designated the

<sup>164</sup> The presentation of these conclusions in categorical form may seem to carry with it an air of dogmatism. It is erroneous, however, to assume that this was intended. The present writer is fully aware of the difficulties in the abstraction of such conclusions from their supporting evidence, but he feels that some constructive formulations are possible and that they offer significant points of departure for further research.

Ethno-historians who are familiar with the defects of the source material pertaining to the history of French Louisiana do not expect an absolute historical certainty. They know too well that there are still many volumes in the French Archives at Paris wherein some additional data can be collected. They also know that many modern works on the history of Louisiana are full of inaccuracies and the most serious errors.

Some of the older works themselves are suspect sources and must be verified before they can be accepted as authoritative. This has been ably demonstrated by such scholars as Father Jean Delanglez, S. J., and Miss Elizabeth McCann in a series of critical essays published in the journal *Mid-America*. A suspect source in particular are the writings of André Pénicaut which constitute our only source material for the origin of the name Baton Rouge. (Of. Elizabeth McCann, "Pénicaut and his Chronicle of Early Louisiana," in *Mid-America*, XXIII, No. 4 (October, 1941), 288-304).

place as that of the Red Stick or Pole. Through contact with the French the original name was changed into Istrouma and then translated into Baton Rouge. There is no doubt, however, about its Indian source and original reference to the Red Pole site.

Fourthly, the location of the Red Pole site cannot be determined with absolute certainty, but there is sufficient evidence to make a scientific case of the claim that it was near Scott Bluff, on a little bayou part of which is now known as Lake Kernan. This identification is much strengthened by official references in early Spanish land grants to an Old Indian Village in the same locality.

Fifthly, the occupants of the Red Pole site were a group of Houma Indians who, both linguistically and culturally, belonged to the great Muskhogean family of the Southeastern Culture Area. Their practice of erecting a tall, reddened pole appears to have been a survival of an ancient tradition symbolizing the unity of the group and the territory occupied by them. It may also have been part of a socio-religious system known as totemism. The Red Pole itself must have disappeared shortly after it was first noticed by the French, for in 1706 the Houma withdrew into the southern section of Louisiana where their descendants are still surviving.

Finally, the French settlement seems to have comprised but a single concession, that of Diron D'Artaquette, which was located near the middle of the Baton Rouge Reach where the city now stands. It did not get started until 1721, although it was granted probably as early as 1718. Its late start and slow development was intimately connected with the poor management of French Louisiana on the part of the Company of the West and its successor, the Company of the Indies. There were no unfriendly Indians in the Baton Rouge area and no English traders to instigate disturbances. Hence, the place did not become a military post until the time of the English and Spanish occupations. The name Baton Rouge survived, although the French made an unsuccessful attempt to change it into Dirombourg and the English actually changed it into Fort Richmond.

Contrary to some previously held theories, then, the place where the famous Red Stick once stood must not be looked for at the site where the city is now situated. It is also futile to revive

the obsolete theory that the place received its name from an unusually tall cypress tree. Furthermore, the assumption that the red pole of the Houma Indians was but a cypress stripped of its branches is left in a footless position, for the artificial nature of the pole and its socio-religious significance can clearly be demonstrated. Most erroneous of all is the information published in some city guides that the Pentagon Barracks and the Old Arsenal were built in 1719. The French settlement, as has been adequately demonstrated, was not even in existence at that time.

## THE POINTE COUPÉE CUT-OFF IN HISTORICAL WRITINGS<sup>1</sup>

By HILGARD O'REILLY STERNBERG

The knowledge that False River occupies a section of channel abandoned a long time ago by the Mississippi River is fairly widespread among Louisianians.

In considering the origin and the date of the cut-off which gave birth to the lake called False River, there is, however, no little disagreement among the chroniclers and historians who mention the incident.

### I. CAUSE

1. *Human interference: different versions.* No scientific treatment of the Pointe Coupée or False River cut-off having yet been made, the material which may be presented here is found in more or less incidental references.

With few exceptions, secondary historical sources explicitly attribute the phenomenon to human interference. These writings might be placed in two general groups.

The writers of the first group note Iberville's ascent of the Mississippi in 1699 and his encounter of a passage or portage across the neck of a meander loop. Because he ordered the passage cleared, Iberville is credited by these writers with initiating the cut-off and changing the course of the river.

The writers responsible for the second group of versions attribute the cut-off to the work of travelers voyaging down the river or commit themselves to little more than merely indicating the responsibility of some human agency.

It must be noted that some few writers—the exceptions mentioned above—set down Iberville's passage through the neck of Pointe Coupée and then point out that the river finally took the same short cut, abstaining, however, from the indication of a causal relationship between the two facts.

<sup>1</sup> The present article represents a small introductory chapter of the geographic study which the writer has made of the False River area. Acknowledgment is gratefully made for the many valuable suggestions and criticisms offered by Professors Richard J. Russell, Fred B. Kniffen and Andrew C. Albrecht of the Louisiana State University.

François-Xavier Martin's statements may be transcribed as an example of the first and most numerous group:

... they [Iberville and his group] came to a place where the river made a considerable bend. Iberville, perceiving a large outlet, caused a number of trees that obstructed it to be cut down, and the barges were drawn through. The Mississippi afterwards so widened the outlet, that in time, the former bed of the river being much obstructed by trees, the stream altered its course, and the outlet became its bed. The place was hence called Point Coupée.<sup>2</sup>

The writers of the second group are well represented by Le Page du Pratz. In his *History of Louisiana*, he says:

... the *Mississippi* ["le fleuve," in the original] ... there ... formed the figure of a circle, open only about an hundred and odd toises [old French measure, one toise equivalent to about two yards] thro' which it made itself a shorter way, and where all its water runs at present. This was not the work of nature alone: two travellers, coming down the *Mississippi*, were forced to stop short at this place; ... Just by them passed a rivulet, caused by the inundation, which might be a foot deep, by four or five feet broad, more or less. One of the travellers ... followed the course of this rivulet, ... He had not gone an hundred toises, before he was very surprised, on perceiving a great opening, as when one is just getting out of a thick forest. He continues to advance, sees a large extent of water, which he takes for a

<sup>2</sup> *History of Louisiana* (New Orleans: J. A. Gresham, 1882), I, 98. Other examples of this kind of statement are to be found in (1) Jean Baptiste Bénard de la Harpe [The real author is the Chevalier de Beaurain who based himself on La Harpe's documents] (Nouvelle-Orleans: A. L. Boimare, Libraire-Editeur, 1831), 11: "... ils [Iberville and his group] trouverent un detour de pointe de douze lieues; M. d'Iberville fit couper les arbres. ... Depuis ce temps-la le Mississippi y a pris son cours: c'est ce qu'on appelle la pointe coupée." The original French text is transcribed; the English translation found in B. F. French's *Historical Collections*, Part III, p. 15, erroneously gives "afterwards" for "depuis". (2) Grace King and John R. Ficklen, *A History of Louisiana* (New Orleans: University Publishing Company, 1897, 3rd ed. rev.), 42: "... the chief pointed to a tiny stream running into the river on the left [right] ... a huge drift pile was cut away, the bottom of the stream was deepened and cleared. ... The Mississippi in course of time adopted this cut-off. ..." (3) Alcée Fortier, *A History of Louisiana* (4 vols., New York: Goupil & Co., of Paris, Manzi, Joyant & Co., successors, 1904), I, 39: "... Iberville noticed a small outlet obstructed with trees. These were cleared. ... The Mississippi gradually adopted this outlet as its bed. ..." (4) Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (32 vols., Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1905), XIII (*Nuttall's Travels into the Arkansas Territory*, 1819), Editor's footnote, p. 307: "Iberville ... cut down a number of trees which obstructed one of the channels thus changing the course of the river so as eventually to cut off the point." (5) Albert Phelps, *Louisiana: A Record of Expansion* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1905), 33-34: "... the Indian guide pointed out a little bayou about six feet wide. ... Bienville found the way barred by a huge pile of drift, thirty feet high and five hundred paces thick. The Canadian woodsmen ... cut a way through the obstruction ... by which the river itself now flows, adopting Iberville's time-saving suggestion." (6) Charles B. Reed, *The First Great Canadian: The Story of Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1910), 169-170: "... they [Iberville and his group] came to a Bayou about six feet wide, which the Chief said would save them about thirty-six miles if they could get through it ... the Canadians cut through a huge log jam and felled trees ... the river soon seized upon the new cut-off and made it its own main channel." (7) Louise Butler, "West Feliciana: A Glimpse of Its History," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, VII (1924), 39: "... Iberville and Bienville ... made the first cut through a narrow neck of land where the river afterwards ran. ..."

lake; but turning on his left, he espies *les Petits Ecores*, . . . he knew these were the waters of the river. He runs to acquaint his companion: . . . they resolve . . . to cut away the roots, which stood in the passage, and to level the more elevated places. They attempted at length to pass their pettyaugre [a large canoe] through, by pushing it before them. They succeeded beyond their expectation; the water which came on, aided them . . . and they saw themselves in a short time in the *Mississippi*, ten leagues lower down than they were an hour before; . . .

This little labour of our travellers moved the earth; the roots being cut away in part, proved no longer an obstacle to the course of the water; the slope or descent in this small passage was equal to that in the river for the ten leagues of the compass it took: in fine, nature, though feebly aided, performed the rest. The first time I went up the river [1719(?)], its entire body of water passed through this part; and though the channel was only made six years before, the old bed was almost filled with the ooze, which the river had there deposited; and I have seen trees growing there of an astonishing size, that one might wonder how they should come to be so large in so short a time.<sup>3</sup>

This and other versions which attribute the cut-off to travelers voyaging down the river may have arisen from the fact that Canadians were employed by the Iberville expedition to clear the passage.

The words of Father Charlevoix might also be cited as representative of the second group. He does not indicate that the travelers were voyaging downstream but tells us they were Canadians.

. . . We encamped the 29th [December, 1721] a little below the mouth of the Red river, in a very fine bay.

The 30th, after having gone five leagues, we passed a second point cut-off. The *Mississippi*, in this place makes a great winding. Some Canadians, by dint of hollowing a little

<sup>3</sup> *The History of Louisiana* (Translation from French. London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1774), 95-97. The quotation is found in II, 268, of the original French edition. Claude C. Robin, *Voyages dans l'intérieur de la Louisiane* (Paris: F. Buisson, 1807), II, 290, subscribes to the Le Page du Pratz version. The same general idea, i. e., travellers going down river, is expressed, among others, by Captain Philip Pittman, *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906. An exact reprint of the original edition, London, 1770), 72: ". . . two Canadians . . . descending the river. . . were stopped. . . One of these travellers . . . determined to follow a little brook, which had been made by the inundations of the river; he had gone but a small distance, when he again found himself by the side of the river. . . [The travellers] agreed to endeavour to get their canoe across, as there was about a foot of water in the brook, which had a little slope towards the lower part of the river; they . . . cut away the roots . . . that . . . obstructed its passage, and the waters of the Mississippi entering seconded their endeavours. . . It is reported that less than six years after the Mississippi passed entirely through this channel. . . ."

brook, which was behind the point, brought the waters of the river into it; which spreading themselves impetuously in this new channel, completely cut-off the point, and hath saved travellers fourteen leagues of way.<sup>4</sup>

Research has indicated that, whereas the entire second group of versions may be discarded, the Iberville expedition from which it appears to be derived, is deserving of our attention.

Although it might appear unnecessary to stress the existence of more than one variation of the same fact, one Louisiana State University Master's thesis demonstrates how confusing these different versions may prove. The writer of the thesis in question, finding two different accounts and not recognizing them for two interpretations of one and the same story, decided to subscribe to both. A strange and confused combination resulted. On the very same page we are told:

[1] Many years ago, before the cut-offs had been made at the Mississippi landings about 1791, False River was the actual bed of the Mississippi River, and that immense body of water . . . here made a detour (cut-off). . . . Through the newly made channel, La Salle [La Salle's explorations: 1678 to 1687; descent of the Mississippi in 1682!] and his men, continued their voyage of discovery.

[2] Following such conditions, new [or now; carbon copy is unclear] False River, Bienville, who was governor at the time, gave leave to a few pioneers to dig a canal from the upper to the lower ends of the turn in the river. The distance across was exceedingly short; so it required but a brief space of time for the tremendous and scouring waters to divert themselves from the natural bed to the artificial channel.<sup>5</sup>

2. *Iberville's short cut in 1699.* Fortunately we are not restricted to secondary sources in considering the Iberville expedition of 1699. There are in existence two reliable first-hand accounts of this expedition: the log book of the frigate *Cheval Marin*<sup>6</sup> and Iberville's own impressions. There is in addition the

<sup>4</sup> B. F. French, ed., *Historical Collections of Louisiana* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846-1853), Part III ["Journal of Father Pierre Francois Xavier de Charlevoix," Letter from New Orleans, January 10, 1722], 174-175.

<sup>5</sup> Elaine C. Lorio, "The Place Names of Pointe Coupée Parish" (Master's thesis in English, Louisiana State University, 1932), 27. This odd combination of the two versions is found, almost word for word, in an old novel, *Zulma*, by Mary Frances Seibert (Natchez, Miss.: Natchez Printing and Stationery Co., 1897).

<sup>6</sup> Usually referred to simply as the *Marin*. Attention to the complete title, as set down in a message from Pontchartrain to Duguay, dated August 19, 1699, is called by Elizabeth McCann, "Pénicaut and His Chronicles of Early Louisiana," in *Mid-America*, XXIII (New Series, XII, No. 4, October, 1941), 291.

narrative of the ship's carpenter, Jean Pénicaut, which is commonly placed among the eye-witness accounts of Iberville's first trip, but which must be regarded with considerable caution.

(a) *Journal of the Frigate Cheval Marin*. This log kept up by an ensign from the frigate *Cheval Marin*, De Sauvole de la Villantry, may be cited in first place because of its more official nature.

Le mercredi 18e [March, 1699]. . . . Sur les trois heures, les Sauvages nous montrèrent une petite rivière, don't l'eau ne couroit point, par laquelle ils nous disoient que nous eussions abrégé nostre chemin de plus d'une journée et demie. M. Iberville s'embarqua dans un petit canot d'escorce, pour voir s'il y avoit lieu d'y passer, n'y ayant que quelques arbres qui bouchoient le passage. Il fit mettre tous les Canadiens avec des haches a terre, et les reste à haler avec des cordes les chaloupes. On fit un chemin en aplanissant la terre le plus qu'on peut. Ensuite on présenta les palans, de sorte que nous halasmes nos chaloupes de l'autre costé; il pouvoit y avoir trente pas de terrain et soixante-dix d'eau, qui accouroient de plus de six lieues, comme nous le vismes en descendant.<sup>7</sup>

(b) *Iberville's account*:

Il y a sur le bord beaucoup de cabanes couvertes de lataniers et un *may sans branches*, *rougy* avec plusieurs testes de poissons et d'ours attachées en sacrifice. Le terrain est parfaitement beau.

Le 18e [March, 1699] mon frère et ces Sauvages m'ont joint, qui n'ont rien tué; mon frère a tué un ours. A deux lieues de la couchée, j'ay trouvée une isle d'une lieue de long; c'est la première que j'aye trouvée sur la rivière. A deux lieues de l'isle, à la droite, j'ay trouvé un pays haut, élevé de cinquante pieds de terre; terre sablonneuse, comme à Estampes, pendant deux lieues; l'autre bord plat comme ailleurs. A six lieus et demye de la couchée, nous avons trouvé un ruisseau large de six pieds, qui vient de la rivière du Mississipy. Les Sauvages m'ont dit que, si je pouvois passer mes chaloupes par là, j'abrégerois d'une journée de chemin. J'envoyay mon frère en canot voir si cela se pouvoit. M'ayant dit qu'ouy,

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Margry, ed., *Découvertes et Établissements de Français dans L'Ouest et dans le Sud de L'Amérique Septentrionale* (6 vols., Paris: Maisonneuve et cie., 1879-1888), IV, 263-264. The translation of the Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana (1937-1938) is not very trustworthy: the amount by which the expedition, according to the Indians, would shorten their route by taking the cut-off, "une journée et demie" (a day and a half), is given as a league and a half (p. 56). The passage is also given in B. F. French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida* (Second Series, "Historical Memoirs and Narratives, 1572-1702," New York: A. Mason, 1875).

avec un peu de travail, il y a un espace de cinq cents pas, où j'ay trouvé un amas de bois de trente pieds de haut, que les grandes eaux avoient amassés les uns sur les autres, qui en bouchent la sortie; je fis travailler a faire un chemin de trois cent cinquante pas de long, et fis le portage de tout ce que j'avois dans ma chaloupe, et avec des palans je les fis passer de l'autre costé et les jeter dans la rivière avec beaucoup de peine. Il pleuvoit et les pays estoit de vase, sur laquelle on ne pouvoit se tenir. Je finis ce travail à neuf heures du soir, avec flambeaux de cannes liées ensemble, et fus coucher de l'autre bord de la rivière, où mon frère, avec les deux canots d'escorce, avoit passé faire les tentes et à souper pour tout le monde.<sup>8</sup>

(c) "*Relations de Pénicaut.*" Pénicaut merges accurate and inaccurate statements in his narrative. The facts recorded by him were no longer fresh in his mind when set down on paper; if he had notes to draw upon, these must have been very scanty. Mistakes in chronology are, therefore, numerous. "In general, the facts he narrates are true, but very often the sequence is awry."<sup>9</sup> Not only does Pénicaut get Iberville's three explorations confused, but he even narrates an imaginary fourth voyage. We cannot, for this reason, be certain that Pénicaut actually did accompany Iberville on this first expedition through the Pointe Coupée short-cut. Nevertheless, as the item with which this investigation is concerned can be confronted with the two preceding contemporary sources, it is given below.

A cinq lieues de ce poteau ["poteau rougi," i.e., Baton Rouge], plus haut a la droite, il y a des ecores ou bords de terre blanche, fort hauts, de trois quarts de lieue de long, au bout desquels on trouvé une langue de terre, qui, avançant fortavant dans le Mississipy, formoit sept lieues de tour. M. d'Iberville, pour éviter la longueur de ce détour fit porter les chaloupes à travers cette langue, qui n'avoit qu'une portee de fusil de traverse et nous fusmes à l'instant de l'autre coste dans le Mississipy, où nous remismes nos chaloupes. Depuis

<sup>8</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 173, "Journal de la Navigation de Lemoyne d'Iberville aux côtes septentrionales du golfe du Mexique pour l'occupation du Mississipi: Navigation de la Badine (Decembre 1698-3 May 1699)." There is a letter from Iberville to the "Ministre de la Marine," dated from La Rochelle, 29 juin 1699, and reproduced in Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 116, under the title: "Voyage de Saint-Domingue a la côte de la Floride. Recherche du Mississipi et premier établissement a la baie du Biloxi." In this "lettre en abrégé" Iberville gives a less detailed account than in his "journal jour par jour" quoted above. In the letter he mentions neither the red stick nor the cut point.

<sup>9</sup> McCann, *loc. cit.*, XXIII, 292.

quelque temps, la rapidité du fleuve l'a tellement miné, qu'il y fait maintenant passer son cours entier. C'est pourquoy cette langue de terre porte à présent le nom de la Pointe Coupée.<sup>10</sup>

The comparison of the three distinct but convergent accounts quoted above appears to prove that Iberville's expedition actually took a short cut across the neck of the False River bend and that a few trees were cut down to expedite the process. It may be further assumed that the termination of the cutting-off process followed within less than a quarter of a century. It would, however, be a mistake to conclude that, because a time parallelism exists between the two facts, they are necessarily bound by a causal relationship. *A priori*, we can only say that their relation could be causal or merely coincidental.

Before entering into an examination of the evidence for and against a causal relationship, the reader will be briefly acquainted with the historical material pertaining to the matter of the age of the cut-off. This will avoid the necessity of separating the problems of cause and of age and permit them to be treated jointly.

## II. DATE

In history, there is no difficulty in expressing the date when some particular person was born or died. Other events, such as the invention of the press or the French Revolution, for example, although spread over months and even years, are also commemorated on one single and more or less arbitrarily chosen day. In the case of a usually protracted natural process, such as a river cut-off, there obviously arises the question as to what particular stage is to be chosen for historical records.

In determining the stage at which to consider a cut-off established, the following distinction might be useful: (1) there is a period of preparation, during which the river discharges through the loop at all stages and through the short-cut only at high stages; (2) the cut-off may be regarded as completed when

<sup>10</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, V, 395. McCann, *loc. cit.*, XXIII, 290-291, after confronting the available manuscript copies, concludes that "the relation contained in Margry [at least as far as the events up to 1704 are concerned] is . . . substantially as Pénicaut narrated it." It must be noted however, that this opinion is not shared by N. M. Miller Surrey who states: "A collation of the manuscript [Pénicaut's] with Margry shows many differences." *Calendar of the Manuscripts in Paris Archives and Libraries Relating to the History of the Mississippi Valley to 1803* (Carnegie Institution of Washington, Department of Historical Research, 1926), I, 48. William O. Scroggs, "Origin of the Name Baton Rouge," in *Proceedings of the Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge* (Baton Rouge: L. S. U. Bulletin, 1917), I, 22, indicates that the "Relation" was published by Pénicaut after his return to France in 1722. McCann, *loc. cit.*, XXIII, 304, gives the impression that the "Relation" was first published in 1887 by Pierre Margry. The fact seems to be that the work was first published in an English translation by B. F. French, *op. cit.*, in 1869. Previous to this date only manuscript copies were available.

only flood waters take the old channel, the cut-off channel being in use at all stages. Obviously, there will always be a gradation between the first and second conditions,<sup>11</sup> this basis for discrimination seems, nevertheless, to be the nearest we can get to a logical criterion. To say that a cut-off is completed when no more water flows through the old channel, for example, would be to postulate a condition usually unattained within a relatively short period, say a couple of decades.

The perusal of both lay and scientific literature indicates that such a problem received no attention in the case of Pointe Coupée, as in many other cut-offs. The commonest statement is that the cut-off took place in 1722, no indication being given as to what criterion was followed in determining the completion of the phenomenon. We do not know who was responsible for giving this particular date a place in history.

Other dates have been advanced. "Old Timer," writing in a Louisiana newspaper (August, 1831), states that the Pointe Coupée cut-off was made in 1721.<sup>12</sup> Thomas Hutchins, in a publication which appeared in 1797, says vaguely that the Mississippi passed through False River "about 70 years ago,"<sup>13</sup> which would place the cut-off in the 1720's. Calculations based on Pittsman's statements<sup>14</sup> would place the cut-off at about 1715. A literal interpretation of La Harpe's *Journal*<sup>15</sup> would indicate that the cut-off became effective at the time of Iberville's expedition, i. e., in 1699. According to Le Page du Pratz, already quoted, when he for the first time ascended the river in 1719(?), the cut-off had been effective for six years, i. e., since 1713(?).

Notwithstanding the many other dates suggested, 1722 gained such popularity that it has come to be considered as an established fact. It was used by the Levee Engineers at least as

<sup>11</sup> Father Charlevoix, in a letter from the Natchez, dated December 25, 1721, tells of having seen a cut-off between the mouth of the Arkansas River and Natchez in such a period of transition. This cut-off was made across a "pretty high point, which advanced into the river on the west side: the river has cut it off, and made it an island, but the new channel is not yet passable, but in the time of floods." Translated from the French in B. F. French, *op. cit.*, III, 130.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Gould's *History of River Navigation*, 337-338. An answer to "Old Timer" appears in the *Florida Gazette*, August 20, 1831; so we may assume that Old Timer's article appeared a few days before.

<sup>13</sup> Gilbert Imlay, *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (3rd. edition. London: printed for J. Debrett, 1797), Appendix No. 1, p. 419.

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*, 72-74.

<sup>15</sup> *Loc. cit.*, already quoted.

far back as 1873.<sup>16</sup> Its adoption and wide diffusion by the Mississippi River Commission in writings and maps<sup>17</sup> lend it added prestige.

### III. SOME CONCLUSIONS

An attempt may now be made to discover whether it is justifiable to attribute the cutting of the Mississippi at Pointe Coupée to Iberville's passage or whether the event would have taken place regardless of this passage. In the course of this examination, some light ought to be shed on the matter of the date of the occurrence.

1. *Human interference unnecessary.* The process of cutting-off of meander loops is an everyday occurrence in nature. The formation of oxbow, horseshoe or better cut-off lakes—one of the most visible results of this process—has been recognized for a long time.

Man has, it is true, caused a number of cut-offs to take place artificially and has in other cases accelerated, as well as retarded, the natural process of the river-shortening.

The paramount fact which should be emphasized here is that man's interference would not be necessary to cause the Pointe Coupée cut-off.

This statement is borne out by many natural cut-offs which occurred within historic times, the following being illustrations: Commerce Cut-off, which occurred in 1874, about forty miles below Memphis; Centennial Lake Cut-off, which occurred in 1876, immediately above the City of Vicksburg; Palmyra or Davis Island Cut-off, which took place in 1867, a few miles below Vicksburg; and Waterproof, which occurred in 1884, opposite L'Argent, Louisiana.<sup>18</sup>

Many more examples of natural cut-offs on the lower Mississippi could be mentioned; suffice it to say that the False River is one of more than twenty actually recorded cut-offs, the vast majority of which took place without the help of any human

<sup>16</sup> "Report of the Commission of Levee Engineers to January 1, 1873," in *Legislative Documents of Louisiana* (1873), 46.

<sup>17</sup> Examples: (1) "Report of the Mississippi River Commission, 1883," Appendix B, Plate IV, in *House Executive Documents*, 48 Cong., 2 Sess., Vol. VI. (2) D. O. Elliott, *The Improvement of the Lower Mississippi River for Flood Control and Navigation* (Vicksburg, Miss.; U. S. W. E. S., War Department, 1932), I, 59; III, plate XI. (3) *New Roads Quadrangle*, 1:62500 (War Department, Corps of Engineers, Edition of 1936).

<sup>18</sup> Elliott, *op. cit.*, I, 64-67. The dates indicated refer simply to the "completion" or "occurrence" of the different cut-offs in the conventional sense. No attempt is made by the present writer to analyze the existing information on these cut-offs, with a view to employing the two-phase concept suggested in the present article.

agency.<sup>19</sup> Some cut-offs, in fact, occurred in spite of man's contrary efforts. Such, for example, is the case of Yucatan Cut-off, which, regardless of costly preventive measures, took place in 1929.<sup>20</sup> Equally expensive efforts could not prevent the natural cut-off across Leland Neck, which had threatened to take place for many years and which finally occurred in 1933.<sup>21</sup>

It might not be out of place to advance here an observation that will be taken up again in subsequent papers of a more technical nature.

To the fact that human interference was entirely unnecessary in the case of the False River Cut-off, might be further added that the achievement of the cut-off as a natural occurrence was, one could almost say, overdue by the end of the 17th century.

The False River channel as it exists today has a total length of about twenty-two miles: four and a half miles of "batture" (i.e., alluvial fill) at the upper end, ten and a half miles of open water (False River proper) and seven miles of batture at the lower end. It is the longest meander loop of the Mississippi. A study of the reconstituted Mississippi course before the cut-off shows that the total length of the bend lopped off was two or three miles longer than the twenty-two-mile section in existence today. Westward movement of the post cut-off active channel of the Mississippi has cut into and shortened the old horseshoe channel.

Mark Jefferson is responsible for introducing the idea that the width of the meander belt of a given river bears a definite numerical relation to the width of the same river.<sup>22</sup> Stated in other words, this means that the "distance between lines drawn tangentially to the extreme points of successive fully developed meanders"<sup>23</sup> is proportional to the width of the river.

Notwithstanding an amount of justified criticism leveled at Jefferson's concept, it has the merit of calling attention to the existence of a certain relation between the dimensions (radii) of the meander loops and the magnitude of the river itself. With-

<sup>19</sup> Elliott, *op. cit.*, I, 59.

<sup>20</sup> H. B. Ferguson, *History of the Improvement of the Lower Mississippi River for Flood Control and Navigation* (Vicksburg, Miss.: War Department, Mississippi River Commission, 1932-1939), 43.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>22</sup> "Limiting Width of Meander Belts," in *National Geographic Magazine*, XIII, 373-384.

<sup>23</sup> Definition of meander belt recently proposed by C. C. Inglis, *Annual Report (Techn.)*, Central Board of Irrigation (India, 1939-1940), 112.

out entering into the study of the highly theoretical numerical ratios existing between the width of the Mississippi River and the radii of its meanders, the fact remains that False River loop, compared with the remaining cut-off loops, was abnormally long and a cut-off at this point would be not at all surprising.

2. *Human interference ineffective.* It may be asked next whether the work done by Iberville's group, as recorded by eye-witnesses, was sufficient (even if unnecessary) to cause, by itself, the cut-off to take place or at least to materially affect the speed at which the natural process was brought to an end. In other words, could the Pointe Coupée cut-off have been originated or accelerated by artificial means? It seems appropriate to compare the work done by Iberville's group with some of the modern cut-off operations carried out and recorded by the Mississippi River Commission.<sup>24</sup>

(a) *Number of men employed.* The "Journal du Voyage" of the Frigate *Cheval Marin* informs one that the total number of men which took part in this expedition was fifty-one, including the commander himself and his brother, priests, pilot, etc. The rank and file, a total of forty men, was made up of Canadians and "flibustiers" which had been taken on board at Santo Domingo.<sup>25</sup> The Journal of the *Cheval Marin* tells us that M. d'Iberville put all the Canadians to work, i.e., about thirty men if we discount the "flibustiers."<sup>26</sup>

(b) *Equipment used.* From the *Cheval Marin's* log<sup>27</sup> it is apparent that the only tools this mere handful of men had were axes.

(c) *Duration of work.* The log of the *Cheval Marin* tells us that at three o'clock [in the afternoon] the savages pointed out the little stream. The travelers did not set to work at once chopping down trees and clearing roots, but first examined the little stream, as both Iberville's account<sup>28</sup> and the Journal of the frigate *Cheval Marin* explicitly state.

Finally, Iberville's account tells us that they finished the work at nine o'clock that night, by the light of torches made by

<sup>24</sup> These records are to be found, for example, in Ferguson, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 242.

<sup>26</sup> A letter from Iberville to the Ministre [de la Marine], in Margry, *op. cit.*, IV, 90. "J'ay pris ici neuf flibustiers de bonne volonté que me remplaceront six de mes Canadiens dont un est mort au Cap, deux que j'ay laissés très malades et deux qui sont actuellement à l'agonie."

<sup>27</sup> Margry, *loc. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> *Loc. cit.*

binding canes together. After this, he relates how he lay down to sleep on the other side of the peninsula. A total of nine hours had elapsed from the time the little stream was first sighted to the time the job was completed.

In order to effect a cut-off, river engineers employ such modern equipment as hydraulic dredges, dragline machines, cutterhead dredges, etc. A great deal of preliminary work (e.g., closely spaced borings) precedes the actual operation in which this elaborate machinery is employed and which usually lasts a few months. Few people familiar with this whole procedure would be of the opinion that the few hours of work performed by a handful of ill-equipped men could obtain identical results.

So as to exemplify the magnitude of the task, the brief description of three artificial cut-offs, chosen at random, are given here:

At Rodney Cut-off, the work "commenced in July 1935 with dredge and a dragline machine, 7,600,000 cubic yards being removed and the cut opened during February 1936."<sup>29</sup>

The Willow Cut-off is described as follows:

... from November 19, 1933 to January 28, 1934, seven dragline machines were operated for 322 machine days, excavating a pilot cut along the proposed channel-way for Willow cut-off. During the period of operations they removed 2,393,000 cubic yards of material. . . . Between December 26, 1933 and May 15, 1934, hydraulic dredges removed 5,100,000 cubic yards of material along the proposed channelway. . . .<sup>30</sup>

Ashbrook Cut-off was made at a very narrow neck. As narrow perhaps as that at Pointe Coupée. The conditions for the cut-off were excellent and two days after the last narrow plug of earth in the middle of the dredged pilot was blasted out, the steamer Mississippi was sailing through the new channel. Even here, the amount of earth dredged was about 3,350,000 cubic yards.<sup>31</sup>

The above comparisons of Iberville's work, purported to have caused the cut-off at Pointe Coupée, with later efforts to obtain artificial cut-offs might be suitably wound up by directing the reader's attention to the fact which occurred in the Civil War.

<sup>29</sup> Ferguson, *op. cit.*, 41.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

In 1864 General U. S. Grant, who had at his command more men and better equipment than Iberville, attempting to by-pass the city of Vicksburg, ordered a canal dug across the narrow neck of the meander loop, which was covered by the guns of the "Gibraltar of the South." His efforts were without success. Yet, twelve years later a natural cut-off occurred in a different place, not far from the site of "Grant's Canal," leaving the city of Vicksburg on a lake.<sup>32</sup>

This goes to prove that the natural evolution of the river's channel is not easily thwarted or accelerated without ample resources of men, equipment and time. It is believed, therefore, that there is no causal relation between Iberville's expedition and False River Cut-off.

3. *The natural cut-off a long-drawn-out process.* The difficulty in deciding when to consider the natural cut-off process as completed has already been indicated, thus implying that we have to deal with a long-term operation. The experience of the Mississippi River Commission, acquired since 1932 in observing the development of numerous cut-offs, has indicated that "following a cut-off many years may pass before the cut-off channel fully develops for carrying low water flow" and that "unless the bend is finally separated from the river by levees, the cut-off would seldom carry the full flow during floods."<sup>33</sup>

The rate of development in Yucatan Cut-off, near Grand Gulf, Mississippi, is an example of the long period required for completion of a natural cut-off. Although hastened by artificial means, without which the full development of the cut-off would have needed several more years, it required eight years for the cut-off to develop completely.<sup>34</sup>

Another even more striking example is furnished by Waterproof Cut-off. About 1855 a ditch had been dug across the narrow (less than a mile wide) neck. Although since that time a portion of the floodwaters had discharged through the ditch during every high water stage,<sup>35</sup> the Chief State Engineer in 1871 declared that "The ditch . . . does not induce the river to follow its course."<sup>36</sup> The cut-off is said by Elliot to have been completed

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>35</sup> Elliott, *op. cit.*, I, 67.

<sup>36</sup> *Report of the Commission of Levee Engineers for 1871*, p. 14.

in May, 1884,<sup>37</sup> nearly thirty years after the channel had been excavated. The word "complete," as used by Elliot, does not appear to coincide with the connotation advanced in the present paper, i.e., it does not indicate that from 1884 on the old loop was completely abandoned by all but the highest flood waters. A few more years may therefore have elapsed before this condition was finally achieved.

4. *Intermediate stage of process at Iberville's passage.* Combining the original account of Iberville with the log of the *Cheval Marin*, the conclusion is reached that the travelers encountered a six foot wide, currentless (at that season) body of water leading across the False River neck from the Mississippi River above to the Mississippi below. This channel was blocked by a mass of logs thirty feet high which had been piled up during high-water stage.<sup>38</sup>

There can be no doubt that the cut-off channel was in existence in 1699. Furthermore, both Iberville's account and the log of the frigate *Cheval Marin* agree that the little stream was pointed out by the Indians, who recommended it as a short cut. It may be surmised that this stream had been known and used by the natives for some time.

The channel in question had been scoured by excess flood waters discharging across the narrow neck. As in the case of the artificial cut-offs, each successive annual flood was to widen and deepen the channel a little more, the river being able to use it at successively lower stages. Ultimately, the new channel would be used the year round, carrying an increasing percentage of the total low-stage discharge. It is evident that in the early part of 1699, this condition had not yet been attained. The last overflow had, upon subsiding, left stranded the pile of wood referred to; no current, only a stagnant body of water, marked the new channel when the place was visited by Iberville. It cannot be ascertained, of course, whether the new channel was utilized by the average annual spring floods or whether only exceptionally large floods caused it to be flushed.

A table of the "Mississippi River, Highest Annual Stages"<sup>39</sup> covering the period from 1880 to 1943 inclusive shows that at Red River Landing, above False River, or at Baton Rouge, below,

<sup>37</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>38</sup> Margry, *loc. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Mississippi River Commission, Vicksburg, Miss., Loose Sheet 34.

73% of the highest annual stages occurred after the month of March. If the expedition reached the shortcut in March (which it did according to the text of the log of the *Cheval Marin*),<sup>40</sup> the chances would be, therefore, three to one that Iberville's expedition took the short cut during rising waters but before the crest of the annual spring flood.

It is interesting to recall a paragraph from the journal of the Jesuit Father Paul Du Ru. This chaplain came to Louisiana when Iberville returned to the colony in 1700. Voyaging up the Mississippi with Iberville on the latter's second ascent of the river, he notes, under the date March 3, 1700, the following episode:

There is still another little river here. It is a branch of the Mississippi, which makes an island whose circuit is about seven or eight leagues. In order to avoid the long journey around, we cut through the small river and are obliged to carry our canoes over the *floating* [italics not in original] trunks of trees to get them on the other side of the island. This portage is about sixteen leagues from the Bayougoulas and nine from the Oumas.<sup>41</sup>

The comparison of this description with the description of 1699 suggests that there was a freer channel in 1700, there having been no need to hack down trees nor to dig the ground. If what this suggests is true, it could mean either (1) that the river waters were higher in March 1700 than in the same season of the preceding year or (2) that the cut-off channel had been considerably deepened in the meantime.

5. *Date of beginning: prehistoric.* As the end of the 17th century, coinciding with the Iberville expedition, has been considered as roughly marking the beginning of historic times in the Lower Mississippi Valley, we may say that the process under examination had its origin in pre-history. The fact that in the narrative of La Salle's exploration in 1682 no mention is to be found of the cut-off bayou which shortened the way for Iberville does not exclude, by any means, the possibility that even then it was in existence. There are many other facts, described seventeen years later, which escaped the observation on that reconnaissance party.

6. *Date of completion: prior to 1722.* There are various kinds of evidence which can be presented with regard to the date

<sup>40</sup> Margry, *loc. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> Ruth Butler, trans., *Journal of a Voyage Made with M. d'Iberville from Biloxi Bay up the Mississippi, Together with an Account of All That Occurred from This Time Until the Departure of the Vessel* (Chicago: Printed for the Caxton Club, 1934), 25.

of completion of the cut-off. The first type of evidence consists of chronicles, letters, etc., which say the writer passed Pointe Coupée at a certain date and obtained the information that the phenomenon had occurred a certain number of years before.

A second type, carrying more weight, consists of letters, memoirs and the like, in which the writer claims to have passed Pointe Coupée on a certain date. When written before 1722, these documents are, of course, the strongest possible evidence in favor of the cut-off having been in effect before that date.

Father Charlevoix, in a letter written on January 10, 1722, at New Orleans, tells how he passed Pointe Coupée on December 30, 1721. He tells, as has been already indicated, how Canadians cut the channel, and does not give one the impression that the cut-off had occurred just before his passage. He adds that the new channel had already been sounded and that more than 30 "brasses" of cord had been reeled out without hitting bottom.<sup>42</sup> By this account we must conclude that the cut-off existed in 1721.

In the *Relation du Voyage de Bénard de la Harpe* the following statement is found:

Le 3 [Janvier 1719] nous avançâmes de 6 lieues et fusmes cabaner aux Baston Rouges. . . . Le 4 [Janvier 1719] ayant avancé de deux lieues, nous passâmes l'isle d'Iberville, de laquelle à la pointe Coupée . . . on compte 3 lieues.<sup>43</sup>

The cut-off existed in 1719.

Although Le Page du Pratz's history was first published about half a century after the cut-off is supposed to have occurred and inaccuracies are, therefore, apt to have crept in, it appears that du Pratz's statement, already cited, to the effect that the new channel was made six years before the time he went up the river in 1719(?), i.e., in 1713(?), is worth keeping in mind.

In conclusion, it might be pointed out that there ought to be no objection to the idea that the process, started before 1699, might only have been concluded in the first or second decade of the following century. The examples of Yucatan and Waterproof cut-offs should lend credibleness to this supposition. It is quite possible that the completion of the phenomenon was abruptly brought about by an extraordinary high stage of the Mississippi, after hanging in the balance for ten or fifteen years of only moderate annual floods.

<sup>42</sup> French *op. cit.*, 424.

<sup>43</sup> Margry, *op. cit.*, VI, 245-246.

# ✓ A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH THEATRE AT NEW ORLEANS, 1806-1842\*

By NELLE SMITHER

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The record of the English stage at New Orleans constitutes an important chapter in the theatrical annals of America. Not only did the New Orleans stage at one time rank with the best in the country, but as the most important in the far South, it dominated the theatrical activity in the surrounding frontier sections. From this "emporium of the South and West" went out actors and stars to further the establishment of the professional theatre in places which hitherto had known only amateur organizations and "strolling players."

In 1806, when it witnessed its first English performance, New Orleans was still largely French. The three years under American rule had brought an increase in the American population; but according to Thomas Ashe, who visited the city in this year, the newcomers had been so occupied with politics and legislation that their minds had "never been sufficiently unbent to form a course of pleasure for themselves."<sup>1</sup> Scattered performances during the next eleven years indicate some theatrical activity, but not until 1818 was the English-speaking population of the city ready to support a full season of professional entertainment. Thereafter, with the exception of four or five seasons, the record is one of success for the English stage at New Orleans. The period between 1818 and 1842 saw a steadily increasing growth of interest in the English drama and the building of two theatres, said to be among the handsomest in the country. To these came the most distinguished stars of the day, and here excellent companies presented the current successes of the New York and London stages.

On the whole, the quality of the dramatic fare offered during these years appears to have been as high as that of the theatres in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. Each season brought some of the most popular Shakespearian and eighteenth century

\* Doctoral dissertation in English, University of Pennsylvania, 1942. Only the historical narrative section of the dissertation is printed in this issue of the *Quarterly*. The tabular material which constitutes nearly half of the dissertation will be published in the next issue.

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in America, Performed in 1806*, 263.

plays; current successes in tragedy, comedy, melodrama, spectacle, and farce; and opera. Special entertainments such as the pantomimes of the famous Ravel family, the ballets of Celeste and Madame Lecompte, and the performances on the "elastic cord" by Herr Cline were also seasonal features.

An analysis of the records which are available today reveals the theatrical interests of the New Orleans audiences; however, it must be borne in mind that these records are incomplete and perhaps inaccurate because of last minute changes in program. So far as the existing data show, over nine hundred plays were given between 1806 and 1842 and of the various types of performance, exclusive of farce, comedy seems to have been the most popular, numbering some one hundred and forty-six titles. Melodramas come next with one hundred and fourteen, and drama is third with at least ninety being represented. Farces, of which over two hundred and fifty were given, have not been considered here, since in their capacity as curtain-raisers and afterpieces they almost invariably appeared in the bills.

According to our record, M. R. Lacy's comic opera, *Cinderella*, was the most popular production, being given some eighty-eight times between its introduction in 1833 and its last performance in 1842. M. G. Lewis' melodrama, *Timour the Tartar*, and T. H. Bayly's comedy, *Perfection*, were next in favor, each attaining sixty-one performances. The comedy, however, had not the long span of popularity that was the melodrama's, having been produced first in 1831. The first performance of Lewis' play was given in 1818, the last in 1842. Next came Bulwer Lytton's comedy, *The Lady of Lyons*, which attained sixty performances in its four years "on the New Orleans boards." Shakespeare's *Richard III* was played fifty-eight times, a record which entitles it to first place among the tragedies. Isaac Pocock's musical version of *Rob Roy* was presented some fifty-six times, and almost as popular was Richard Sheridan's excellent comedy, *The School for Scandal*, with fifty-five performances scattered over a period of twenty-two years. Another favorite of Sheridan's was his adaptation of Kotzebue's *Pizarro*,<sup>2</sup> which achieved forty-six productions during its long stay in the repertory.

The most popular of the dramatists represented on the New Orleans stage was William Shakespeare whose plays were presented for a total of three hundred and sixty-one performances,

<sup>2</sup> The newspaper notices of this play attribute it to Sheridan.

this exclusive of Garrick's version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, given twenty-seven times, and of the Dryden-Davenant adaptation of *The Tempest*, which reached thirteen productions. Of his plays, the tragedies were the favorites, *Richard III* being first with fifty-eight presentations, followed by *Hamlet* with fifty, *Macbeth* with forty-four, and *Othello* with thirty-seven.

Second in favor among the dramatists was John Baldwin Buckstone with three hundred and forty known performances of thirty-six plays. The most popular of his pieces were the farces, *The Dead Shot*, *A Husband at Sight*, and *Mischief Making*; and the spectacular *Ice Witch*. After him come several playwrights, all about even in popularity: J. R. Planché; T. H. Bayly; John Poole; and George Colman the younger. Not far below these was James Sheridan Knowles, who was represented by thirteen of his plays.

The intense rivalry which once existed between the American and French citizens of New Orleans may have been in part responsible for the enthusiastic reception accorded the works of native authors. The audiences of the English theatres welcomed the plays of both known and unknown playwrights, and the tag "by a gentleman of this city" could generally be counted on to insure a good house. Fifty-eight native writers were represented on the New Orleans stage between 1806 and 1842, the most prominent being William Dunlap, John Howard Payne, Robert Montgomery Bird, Samuel Woodworth, R. P. Smith, James N. Barker, Nathaniel Parker Willis, Mordecai Noah, John A. Stone, Charlotte Barnes, and N. H. Bannister. Nineteen of Bannister's compositions were given, a number equalled in the record by only Shakespeare, Buckstone, and Planché. Ten of John Howard Payne's plays were presented, his *Thérèse* leading the list of native compositions with forty-three productions. There were at least thirty-four performances of William Dunlap's *The Stranger*, thirty-three of Payne and Washington Irving's *Charles II*, and thirty-one of Mordecai Noah's *She Would Be a Soldier*.

New Orleans' interest in native writers is clearly demonstrated by the number of local playwrights who were given a hearing on its English stage. The record lists twelve of these, or nineteen if there may be included those actors whose plays were produced during their temporary residence in the city while members of the theatrical companies. Aside from the actor-play-

wrights, N. H. Bannister and J. M. Field, James Rees leads this group with ten pieces, the most popular of which were *Charlotte Temple* and *Lafitte, the Pirate of the Gulf*.

Approximately seven hundred players performed in New Orleans between 1806 and 1842, among them many of the leading actors of the day. The "strolling players" of the first few seasons were succeeded by excellent stock companies whose personnel included, at some time or another, names prominent in theatrical history: Mrs. Entwistle, Mrs. Battersby, Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Williams, Thomas Hilson, Mrs. Alexander Drake, Edwin Forrest, James M. Scott, Mrs. Tatnall (later Mrs. Pritchard), Joe Cowell, John Greene, H. G. Pearson, E. S. Conner, John Gilbert, Jane Placide, Mr. and Mrs. George Farren, James Thorne, James Murdoch, Thomas Bishop, H. J. Finn, Mrs. James Maeder (the former Clara Fisher), John Latham, Charlotte Cushman, John Mills Brown, Mr. and Mrs. George Barrett, and Mrs. Henry Hunt (later the famous Mrs. John Drew).

In the early 1820's New Orleans became a part of the theatrical "circuit" and in rapid succession was visited by almost all of the important stars of the day. Thomas A. Cooper led the way, followed by Junius Brutus Booth, William Conway, Lydia Kelly, Edwin Forrest, Mrs. Edward Knight, Clara Fisher, Mrs. Duff, James Hackett, James Wallack, George Hill, Dan Rice, Tyrone Power, Josephine Clifton, Ellen Tree, Mrs. Fitzwilliam, John Baldwin Buckstone, and Fanny Elssler, to name some of the most popular. Many of them came by sea from their runs in the eastern cities or Charleston; others took the inland water route, travelling by steamboat down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. The journey by either route was long and arduous, and the fact that so many stars undertook it indicates that engagements in New Orleans were equally as profitable as those in the eastern cities. "Mammon and fame led them on," asserted James H. Caldwell in whose theatre many of them appeared.<sup>3</sup>

Until recently the historians of the American theatre have paid little attention to the New Orleans stage. The only nineteenth century treatment of the subject, *The Drama in New Orleans*, was written by an actor, John Gaisford, in 1849. Though Gaisford had visited the city, his very brief account of the early English and French theatres is full of errors. The twentieth

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<sup>3</sup> James Rees, *Dramatic Authors of America*, 53.

century pioneer in the field of the English theatres at New Orleans has been Miss Lucile Gafford, who has written an unpublished Master's thesis, "Material Conditions in the Theatres of New Orleans before the Civil War," and an unpublished doctoral dissertation, "A History of the St. Charles Theatre in New Orleans, 1835-1842." The first, which is based on unreliable secondary sources, is of no value; the second presents in detail the history of one house during an important period in New Orleans' theatrical history. Within more recent years there appeared in *American Literature*, XI (May, 1939), an article by Dr. R. P. McCutcheon entitled "The First English Plays in New Orleans."

The purpose of the present study is to record in some detail the history of the English theatre at New Orleans from 1806 to 1842. Theatrical annals of other American cities, books on the drama in general, and memoirs of those actors who visited New Orleans were consulted in the preparation of this work, but for the most part material was taken from the files of the New Orleans newspapers.

#### CHAPTER I

##### THE THEATRE IN NEW ORLEANS BEFORE 1818

###### THE FRENCH THEATRE

The first dramatic performance in New Orleans was given in the year 1791 when a group of French comedians, refugees from the Negro insurrections in Santo Domingo, came to the city.<sup>1</sup> They performed at first in halls, tents, or wherever they could find space and in 1792 established themselves in a house on St. Peter Street, between Royal and Bourbon. "La Salle du Spectacle" or "Le Spectacle de la Rue St. Pierre," as the theatre was called, had a checkered history, and several times during its early years the civil and military authorities ordered it closed. In 1807 the old building was renovated and designated as the Théâtre St. Pierre, but after three unsuccessful seasons it closed its doors forever.<sup>2</sup>

The erection of another French theatre early in 1808 was partly responsible for the failure of the St. Pierre. This was the "Théâtre St. Phillippe," a neat brick building located on St. Philip Street, between Royal and Bourbon. The house, which was said

<sup>1</sup> Alcée Fortier, *History of Louisiana*, II, 146.

<sup>2</sup> Nellie Warner Price, "Le Spectacle de la Rue St. Pierre," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, I, 3 (January, 1918) 221-223.

to have cost \$100,000, had a parquet and two rows of boxes and could accommodate seven hundred people. To this stage in 1811 came William Duff, a pioneer in the English theatre in New Orleans, and here the American thespians gave performances "for sweet charity's sake." Between 1817 and 1820 several American troupes shared the theatre with the French companies, performing on alternate nights. The St. Philip was frequented by the best French society during these years but after the opening of the Théâtre Orleans in 1819 it ceased to be a fashionable resort and though performances were given there until 1832, they failed to attract those who had once patronized the house.

The Théâtre Orleans, erected in 1819, was the most famous of the French theatres of New Orleans and the third of that name. The first house, erected on Orleans Street, between Royal and Bourbon, was constructed in 1809 and destroyed by fire in 1813. It was promptly rebuilt and enjoyed three successful seasons before it burned in 1816. Two years later John Davis erected another building on the same site at a cost of \$180,000.<sup>3</sup> The interior and scenic arrangements of the house were excellent, but the exterior with its unpretentious Roman Doric facade was described as inartistic. In November 1819 Davis opened the theatre with a company which he had brought from France and here, during the next forty years, the creole families of New Orleans saw the best in French opera and drama, presented by actors recruited from the Parisian theatres.

#### THE ENGLISH THEATRE, 1806-1817

The first English theatrical performance in New Orleans took place on April 29, 1806, just three years after the United States had acquired Louisiana. On that evening in Moore's Large Building on Chartres Street, a Mr. Rannie presented "A Theatrical Entertainment in three acts called *The Doctor's Courtship* and two acts of the pantomime of *Don Juan*."<sup>4</sup> This "celebrated performer from Europe and lately from the metropolis of the United States" had arrived in the city over a month before, making his first appearance on March 14 in Tessier's Large Room at 27 St. Philip Street. Here he had displayed his "surprising Powers of Ventriloquism, the mimicking of various Birds and Beasts, and also a larger variety of Philosophical and Magical Operations than ever have been offered for public approbation."

<sup>3</sup> Gibson's *Guide and Directory of the State of Louisiana and the Cities of New Orleans and Lafayette*, 1838, p. 315.

<sup>4</sup> *Louisiana Gazette*, April 29, 1806.

The public must have been pleased with Rannie's entertainment. Subsequent advertisements record other evenings of ventriloquism at Tessier's and then on April 17, he moved to the city tavern in Moore's Large Building. "The room was handsomely fitted up for the occasion," reported the *Louisiana Gazette* of the 15th, "well illuminated and rendered cool and pleasant—with plenty of music." It is likely that Rannie included dramatic offerings in his bills soon after his removal from Tessier's, for on May 7 he announced Mrs. Rannie's benefit, an event which usually did not take place until the beneficiary was well known. The bill on this evening included Massinger's *New Way to Pay Old Debts*; a farce, *The Unfortunate Gentleman*; ventriloquism; and the "wonderful operation" of cutting off and then replacing a man's head without his feeling any pain.

On the 16th Rannie presented *The Battle of the Nile*, "at considerable expense and trouble." This spectacle, based on the naval engagement between Bonaparte and Lord Nelson, was to show "men sinking and swimming and Crokadies (*sic*) molesting them and Whales, Sharks, Dolphins, Swords, and Flying Fish and Mermaids swimming on the surface of the water." The newspapers carry no notices of Rannie's activities after this performance, and it is impossible to say whether he left the city or merely ceased to advertise.

On April 23, 1811, William Duff announced in the *Louisiana Gazette* that by an arrangement with M. Coquet, the proprietor of the St. Philip, his American Company was to appear in the theatre once or twice a week during the season. Three nights later he gave the first performance, consisting of *The Unfortunate Gentleman*, *The Doctor's Courtship*, and bird imitations. Listed in the casts were Messrs. Wood, Wilcox, and Thompson.

Nothing is known of Duff's activities during the following month. On June 27 the *Louisiana Gazette* carried his announcement for the "English Theatre at the Grand Ball, Condé Street." He stated in this notice that he had spared no trouble or expense to make the theatre comfortable. For the opening performance on the 29th, he offered T. J. Dibdin's spectacle, *The Slaves in Barbary*, and a "number of operations, which for their singularity, have commanded the admiration of many eminent philosophers who took delight in the study of combination and the influence over the imagination by artful attractions and experi-

ments interspersed with logic." The cast of the play as given in the *Louisiana Gazette* includes names omitted from Duff's earlier notice: Wiles, Hamilton, Taylor, Carter, Spencer, Sanders, and Briley.

On August 7 the "Society of Artists" united with Duff in a performance which, originally scheduled for the 3rd, had been postponed by bad weather. The newspaper notice mentions only Madame Douvillier and M. Tessier, French actors who took the leads in the pantomimes, *The Two Quakers* and *The Two Hunters or The Dairy Maid*. Duff performed feats of balancing, danced on the slack wire, and gave an imitation of a drunken man. With this performance Duff's name disappears from the newspapers. Almost a year later we learn from the *Louisiana Gazette* (May 21, 1812) that he was still in New Orleans allied with an itinerant acrobat, Siggismundi, and a Mr. Love. At a house on Bienville Street, formerly used as a ballroom, they entertained with balancing and "philosophical experiments." For May 24 they announced a musical farce, *The Two Blind Fiddlers*.

Of greater importance than Duff's presentations are the amateur performances which from 1812 to 1817 constituted the only theatrical activity in English. The Thespian Benevolent Society, composed of many of New Orleans' best-known citizens, undoubtedly did much during these years to create an interest in the English drama and to prepare the way for the professional troupes which were to come. On January 24, 1812, at the St. Philip Street Theatre the amateurs gave Colman's comedy, *John Bull*, "to relieve the distresses of their fellow creatures." On April 3, they brought out Colman's *Heir at Law* and James Kenney's *Raising the Wind*. An editorial in the *Louisiana Gazette* (April 6) tells of the success of this performance.

We were again gratified on Friday last with the representation of a Comedy and Farce in the English language at the St. Philip Street Theatre. Whatever may be thought objectionable in the comedy, we cannot but say we were really gratified. And it surely must have given the gentlemen who for a moment "left their usual avocations for a path untrodden" the most pleasurable sensations in the recollections of the brilliance of the audience, of the thundering applause they received, of the cheering smiles and approbations of the fair, and in the sweet recollections that while amusing themselves they were largely contributing to the relief of distressed humanity.

The "pressure of the times" and the severity of the weather were said to be responsible for the appearance of the amateurs on January 23, 1813. On that evening their performance of *The Poor Gentleman* netted \$426.50 to the Charitable Society of New Orleans.<sup>5</sup> The comedy was repeated on February 23 with J. T. Allingham's farce, *The Weathercock*, as an afterpiece.

The turbulent war years, 1814 and 1815, yield no newspaper announcements of either professionals or amateurs, and not until February 17, 1816, does the Thespian Benevolent Society again figure in the records. Their production of *A Cure for the Heartache* on that date was followed on March 28 by Colman's comedy, *Who Wants a Guinea?*, and Samuel Foote's humorous interlude, *Taste*. The mention in the announcement that Mr. Robinson was to take the part of Lady Pentweazle suggests that this actor was already well-known. On April 27 the bill at the St. Philip consisted of a French play entitled *Joueur* and Oulton's farce, *The Somnambula*, with Robinson as Somno. The notice does not state whether the latter was presented by the amateurs or by professionals. The next presentation of the Thespian Society came on November 21, 1816, when, "for the benefit of the sufferers by the late fire," they gave Charles Kemble's *Point of Honor* and Allingham's *'Tis All a Farce*. Again Robinson was the only member of the cast to be listed in the announcement.

The Thespians gave their first performance of 1817 on March 11, presenting for the benefit of the Female Orphan Asylum John Tobin's comedy, *The Honey Moon*, and the farce, *The Father Outwitted*. On the 28th they repeated the comedy and offered as an afterpiece Jackman's farce, *All the World's a Stage*. The day before the performance the *Louisiana Gazette* commented: "We are happy to find that the play of *The Honey Moon* is to be repeated. . . . From the few opportunities of rational amusement afforded to that portion of our fellow citizens who do not understand the French language, an English play is at all times a matter of interest."

It is strange that the writer of the above overlooked the following notice which had appeared in the *Louisiana Gazette* of March 22: "Rational Amusement. A. Cargill having taken the St. Philip Street Theatre, intends giving on Saturday evening, March 22, an entertainment to consist of a number of Moral,

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, February 13, 1813.

Patriotic, and Humorous Recitations and Songs." There are no extant bills or newspaper notices giving the details of this or of the next few performances by Cargill; however, an announcement in the *Louisiana Gazette* of April 10 points to an early alliance with Robinson, the featured player of the Thespian productions. On that date Robinson informed the public that his benefit performance of Isaac Pocock's *The Miller and His Men* and the farce, *Animal Magnetism*, would take place shortly. The event did not take place until May 23, however, and then *The Weathercock* was substituted for Mrs. Inchbald's farce. The cast for the melodrama included Cargill as Lothair, Robinson as Karl, and a Mr. King as Grundoff. In the afterpiece Cargill was Old Fickle, Robinson, Briefwit, and Jones, "his second appearance," Tristram Fickle.

For his own benefit on June 2, Cargill presented *Othello* and William Macready's *Village Lawyer*. The explanation accompanying the announcement of the performance shows that Cargill may have had some doubts as to the public's reaction to his choice of *Othello*.

In presenting this entertainment to the citizens of New Orleans, Mr. Cargill feels confident of giving at least as much satisfaction as has ever been experienced by an American audience in this place. The merits of the celebrated author of this piece, so justly termed the father of the English stage, are too well known to require any remarks on this occasion; and the weight of the piece depending principally on a small number of characters, it is conceived to be perfectly within the compass of the present society.<sup>6</sup>

Apparently the little company at the St. Philip Street Theatre disbanded soon after this. Except for the appearance of Cargill and Jones in a benefit for the French actor, Louis Douvillier, at the recently built Olympic Circus, on June 5, there is no further record of the troupe until fall. According to the notice in the *Louisiana Courier* of June 2, Messrs. Jones and Cargill, "amateurs," were to deliver all the English speeches in *The Battle of Bunker Hill, or The Death of General Warren*, "a great pantomime in 2 acts, intermixed with dialogues, etc."<sup>7</sup> The "new sceneries" were to be executed by Jones.

The American Theatre (the St. Philip Street Theatre) reopened "for one night only" on November 4, 1817 when Cargill,

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, May 30, 1817.

<sup>7</sup> The newspaper notices do not indicate the author. The title resembles that of J. D. Burk's play, on the same subject; however, his *Bunker Hill, or The Death of General Warren* is a five act tragedy, not a pantomime with occasional dialogue.

"having been dissatisfied in receiving his benefit last spring," offered the comedy *How to Die for Love*, Poole's interlude, *Intrigue*, and John Bray's farce, *The Toothache*. In December the Cargill troupe renewed its activities, advertising for the 5th the "celebrated tragedy of *Henry IV*, or *The Humours of Sir John Falstaff*." Mr. Vos, "lately from the eastern Theatres," was Hotspur, Cargill was King Henry IV, Robinson was Prince of Wales, and Jones was Falstaff. Tickets and places were to be had from Jones at the theatre: Box \$1.50; Pitt \$1.00; Gallery \$.50. For some reason the performance was postponed several times and did not take place until the 15th.

A critique in the *Louisiana Courier* of the 15th throws some light on the personnel of the little troupe.

We were greatly disappointed on Wednesday evening last at not receiving our anticipated pleasure in witnessing the performance of *Henry IV*, however as we are informed that great pains have been bestowed in bringing this admired piece forward we anticipate two-fold pleasure on this evening (when we understand the performance is to take place). We are promised the part of Hotspur by Mr. Vos, from the eastern theatres, who is said to be a "Theatrical Genius," and we may expect in *his* Hotspur, "Hotspur himself"—Mr. Jones as Falstaff will do justice to the character—Mr. Cargill is from Kentucky and to his talents we are no stranger—Mr. Robinson likewise claims our attention, without rivalry he is the first comic player in this part of the country, and in the afterpiece (*The Toothache*) he will have full scope for his abilities; the Amateurs no doubt will likewise obtain our approbation. Let us not dampen their exertions, but compose what is called a "GOOD HOUSE" and patronize the rising merit of our beloved country.

The performance seems to have been all that was predicted, for on December 18, "in consequence of the particular request of a number of the citizens of New Orleans," the "American Performers" announced a repetition of *Henry IV* to take place at the Olympic Circus. On the 26th at the St. Philip Street Theatre they gave two old favorites, *How to Die for Love* and *The Toothache*.

These presentations of Cargill's troupe at the St. Philip Street Theatre and the Olympic Circus bring to a close the first period in the history of the English theatre in New Orleans. With the new year came Noah Ludlow and a regularly organized company to present a sixteen-week season of tragedy, comedy, and farce.

## CHAPTER II

## THE SEASONS OF 1818 AND 1819

## THE AMERICAN THEATRICAL COMMONWEALTH COMPANY, 1818

The season of 1818 is important in the annals of the early English theatre in New Orleans, for Noah Ludlow's company from Tennessee, while not the first professionals to give English performances in the city, were the first to give them regularly for an entire season.

Noah M. Ludlow had begun his career in 1813, at the age of eighteen, playing minor roles in the stock company of John Bernard of Albany. Two years later he joined a band of strolling players under the veteran manager, Sam Drake, Sr., and for the next few seasons played in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky. In June, 1817, he and several of his fellow actors left Drake and formed a Commonwealth Company. They played their way through Kentucky and were enjoying a successful season in Nashville when Ludlow decided to try his fortune in New Orleans. In his *Dramatic Life as I Found It* he explains that this decision was prompted by the fact that no English-speaking company had appeared there, and that a letter to Richard Jones, an acquaintance of his in the city, had brought news not only of the excellent prospects for an American company but of a small theatre to be rented.<sup>1</sup>

Ludlow relates that his associates did not share his enthusiasm for the venture, but by the end of the Nashville season all except one, Aaron Phillips, had agreed to accompany him. Some, fearful for the success of the undertaking, withdrew from the commonwealth system under which they had started out the previous June, and in the reorganization, John Vaughan, Thomas Morgan, and Ludlow became the "sharers." Under this arrangement they were to reap the profits or the losses at the close of the New Orleans season while the other members of the company were to receive stipulated salaries.

The account which Ludlow gives of the journey to New Orleans differs somewhat from that which can be made up from the newspaper notices of the event. The company may have left Nashville around October 20 and played a fortnight in Natchez, as he says, but the New Orleans opening did not take place on December 24, 1817. The steamboat, *Orleans*, on which they made

<sup>1</sup> *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, 120.

the trip to Natchez, did not reach the city until January 7, 1818,<sup>2</sup> and the papers carried no announcement of the company until three days later.

The first announcement appeared in *L'Ami des Lois* on January 10.

The American Theatrical Commonwealth Company having recently arrived in this place, take this opportunity to inform the patrons of the Drama that they have entered into an agreement with the proprietor of the St. Philip Street Theatre for the purpose of performing regular Dramatic pieces; and insure them that every exertion will be made to select such pieces as shall tend to render the amusement at the same time pleasing, moral, and instructive. The Theatre will therefore open on Tuesday Evening, January 13, 1818, with a celebrated comedy in five acts written by John Tobin, esq., called *The Honey Moon*. . . . The evening's amusement to conclude with an admired farce in three acts translated from the French of *Ruse contre Ruse* by Mrs. Inchbald called *The Midnight Hour or A War of Wits*. . . . Nights of performance, Tuesdays and Fridays. The doors will be open at 5 o'clock. Tickets of admission one dollar for box and pit—six bits for gallery. Children under twelve years of age, half price. As smoking is always disagreeable to ladies, 'tis to be hoped no gentleman will indulge in that practice while in the theatre. . . .

The cast for the opening night as given in this notice is not identical with that Ludlow recalls. Both the *Dramatic Life as I Found It* and the paper list Mr. and Mrs. Ludlow, Mr. and Mrs. Morgan, John and Henry Vaughan, Lucas, and Brainbridge, but in the notice Mrs. Cummins, and not Mrs. Vaughan, is cast as Juliana and among the actors are Messrs. Cummins and Hanna. Of the Mr. and Mrs. Jones and Mr. Plummer to whom Ludlow refers, no mention is made; nor do their names appear in subsequent notices.

The bill for the second performance on January 16 consisted of a novelty, William Dimond's *Foundling of the Forest*, and the familiar farce, *The Weathercock*. A gentleman who attended the theatre on this evening sent a communication to the editor of the *Louisiana Gazette*, who printed it in the issue of the 20th. For Ludlow, Mrs. Morgan, and Mrs. Cummins the critic had the highest praise. Ludlow, he reported, had an easy deportment, "a

<sup>2</sup> Registration of Steam Boats, Barges, Flatboats, etc., entering the Port of New Orleans, 1806-1812, City Hall Archives, New Orleans.

gentility of carriage which is the best feather in the cap of an actor." He did not feel that Vaughan was entirely successful in his personation of the Count de Valmont (*Foundling of the Forest*) though he acted with "a tolerable grace." Lucas was "too tame and actionless" in his role as the villainous Baron Longueville, and Hanna not only suffered from "an unbecoming shyness and stiffness of demeanor," but in many scenes his attitude was one of stupid indifference. In spite of these weaknesses the critic declared that he had been pleased with the performances.

The majority of the plays presented by the American Commonwealth Company were new to this city which had seen only the limited repertoires of Messrs. Rannie, Duff, and Cargill. The season continued with M. G. Lewis' *The Castle Spectre*, Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, Home's *Douglas*, Charles Johnson's *The Farm House*, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, John Tobin's *Curfew*, Thomas Morton's *Speed the Plough*, and William Dunlap's *The Stranger*. The new farces included Charles Kemble's *Plot and Counterplot*, O'Keeffe's *The Rival Soldiers*, J. T. Allingham's *Fortune's Frolic*, James Kenney's *Turn Out*, Thomas Dibdin's *Of Age Tomorrow*, and Theodore Hook's *Darkness Visible*.

The benefits began on March 6 when Morgan offered two old favorites. The run of novelties was resumed on the 10th with Vaughan's presentation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Andrew Cherry's *Miss in Her Teens*. Unfavorable weather, which had caused many postponements, this season forced Ludlow to take his benefit on the 17th, almost a week later than he had planned. The novelty on this occasion was George Lillo's *George Barnwell*, a tragedy which, in later years, became the standard Christmas play. On his night Lucas offered Theodore Hook's *Tekeli* with new scenery "by a distinguished artist of the city" and O'Keeffe's farce, *The Irishman in London*.

A communication in the *Louisiana Gazette* of March 20 reveals that the public was indifferent to these performances. The writer asserted that the American company would not remain many weeks longer, owing to the lack of support. "The expenses of a theatre here are great," he remarked, "and since their arrival it is thought they have hardly made sufficient to defray them."

The last performances of the month featured Thomas Morton's comedy, *The Way to Get Married*, Colman's *The Mountaineers*, and Andrew Cherry's farce, *The Hotel*.

Now, as the season drew to an end, the newspapers announced the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. John Savage from Boston. They were to perform during the remainder of the company's stay in the city, four or five days at the most, stated the notices. Savage made his bow on April 2 as Pierre in *Venice Preserved* and on the 4th Mrs. Savage appeared as Lady Elizabeth in Marie Kemble's farce, *The Day after the Wedding*. The visitors continued in James Kenney's melodrama, *Ella Rosenberg*, Bickerstaff's farce, *The Romp*, Dunlap's *The Blind Boy*, and for their benefit, on the 15th, Frederick Reynolds' comedy, *Laugh When You Can*, and C. D. Dibdin's operatic farce, *The Waterman*. Their last appearance was advertised for April 18 but on the 17th the *Louisiana Gazette* reported their "sudden departure" and as a consequence an unavoidable change in the program originally announced.

The benefits commenced again after the departure of the Savages. The company volunteered their services for Richard Jones on the 21st, and on the 23rd assisted at a benefit for the French musician, M. Maurice, the bill on the latter occasion consisting of *The Birthday* and *Don Juan*.

The last benefit was that of Mrs. Vaughan on the 25th when she presented Mrs. Inchbald's drama, *Lovers' Vows*, and *Plot and Counterplot*. On May 1 the season came to a close with *The Castle Specter* and *A Miss in Her Teens*.

The company had not escaped criticism during this sixteen-week season, but in general their repertoire had been favorably received. The opinion expressed in a communication in the *Louisiana Gazette* of March 20 was doubtless shared by many.

Now tho' the players here would not bear a comparison with those of London, New York, or Philadelphia, yet they are respectable in many walks of the drama. . . . They have done tolerable justice to some of the best comedies in the English language; and the public must indeed be fastidious when not pleased with most of their farces.

The season was a financial success. Ludlow recalls that after he and his two partners had paid the actors' salaries and the current expenses of their families, there remained over \$3,000 in the treasury. This he regarded as "no contemptible profit."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 152.

## THE AMERICAN COMPANY, 1818

The American Company under the direction of Cargill gave their first performance of 1818 at the St. Philip Street Theatre on January 5 when they presented *Othello*. Four nights later they appeared at the Olympic Circus in *The Duel*, an operatic comedy not previously seen in New Orleans, and in *The Toothache*. They repeated the farce on the 22nd in an evening's entertainment which included ropedancing, equestrian performances, and the pantomime, *The Tailor of Brentford*, given by the French troupe which occupied the Circus. For the 25th when Douvillier, manager of the Circus, took a benefit, the newspaper advertised "an entire new American performance called *The Watchword, or Quito Gate* got up by Mr. Jones."

The last announcement to list the names of all the principals of the troupe was that for Cargill's benefit on February 26. A communication printed in the *Louisiana Gazette* of this date suggests that the troupe had not been successful of late. "He has some claims on the public," said the writer of Cargill, "inasmuch as he has ever shown a willingness to give assistance when called on to exert his powers for a benevolent purpose. . . . We hope he will not be deserted on the present occasion when he asks for a small share of the public munificence."

Vos' benefit took place at the St. Philip Street Theatre on March 14 when, assisted by the American Commonwealth Company, he presented Shakespeare's *Richard III* and Greffulhe's farce, *The Budget of Blunders*. Included in the cast were the beneficiary, King, and Robinson, but not Cargill. On April 21, the Commonwealth Company again volunteered its services, this time for the benefit of Jones who offered William Dimond's melodrama, *The Doubtful Son*. There is no record of Robinson's benefit, and King's on April 7 had taken the form of a vocal and instrumental concert at the Orleans Ball Room. In a communication in the *Louisiana Gazette* of this date appeared a statement which is suggestive not only in its application to King but in the possibility that it was applicable to each member of the troupe with which he had been associated. The writer reported that King had been rather unfortunate during the winter, having been unable to procure employment, "however disposed to work."

Early in January a communication in the *Louisiana Gazette* had suggested that "the old and new companies coalesce," but

apparently Ludlow and his partners had not thought favorably of the suggestion. The ultimate disbanding of Cargill's company was inevitable. The little troupe could not compete for long with the varied and extensive repertoire of the larger Commonwealth Company.

THE TURNER TROUPE, 1819

The only theatrical activity during the early months of the 1818-1819 season was in the French theatres. Noah Ludlow did not return to New Orleans, though his friend, Nathan Morse, had assured him of the support of the influential American citizens and had suggested the possibility of his sharing the new Orleans Theatre with the French troupe which was to occupy it on its completion.<sup>4</sup> In his *Dramatic Life as I Found It* Ludlow explains that the Commonwealth company had disbanded at the close of the last season and in the fall he had found it impossible to get together another company worthy of the discriminating New Orleans audience.

Early in March of 1819 appeared the first reference to an English performance that season. This was an announcement inserted in the *Louisiana Gazette* of the 2nd by Mr. Phillips, "from the Theatres of New York, Philadelphia and Charleston." He promised in the course of the next week "An Histrionic Divertissement or Evening's Dramatic Entertainment selected from the most approved authors, interspersed with satirical extracts from Alexander Stevens' celebrated Lecture on Heads and the most striking passages from some of our favorite Dramatic writers." The entertainment took place in the Orleans Ball Room on March 10 and was enthusiastically reviewed in the *Louisiana Gazette* of the 13th. This critic reported that well-deserved applause had greeted the performer, and added, "It gives us infinite pleasure to learn that an American Theatre will be established and conducted in New Orleans by a gentleman of his merit." Apparently Phillips, the same Aaron Phillips who had refused to accompany Ludlow to New Orleans the previous year, had changed his mind on hearing of his former associate's success and had decided to try his luck here. He remained a month during which he repeated the divertissement and played a short engagement with a little troupe of players that had arrived soon after he had. Most of his time, however, was devoted to effecting the necessary arrangements for the next season when he planned to return with his own company.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

The company which dominated the theatrical scene in 1819 was under the direction of William A. Turner, a pioneer manager of theatres in Pittsburgh, Lexington, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. The troupe consisted of Mrs. Turner, her young son and daughter, Mrs. Fitzallan, Messrs. Adams, Hanna, Melville, and A. Cargill. Aaron Phillips played a three nights' engagement with them the last of March, and in April they were joined by Abercrombie, "of the Philadelphia and Baltimore theatres."

They gave their first performance at the St. Philip Street Theatre on March 8. For that evening Mrs. Turner promised an address in defense of the drama; a variety of select pieces, recited and sung with the aid of Hanna and Cargill; the principal scenes in *Three Weeks after Marriage*; and as a concluding number, an "Ode on Jackson's Victory at New Orleans." During the latter there was exhibited a "Transparency, representing the Genius of America, crowning with laurels the Tomb of the Immortal Washington."

Mrs. Turner, "from the Theatre Royal, Bath, and Bristol," had made her New York debut in 1807 as Angela in *The Castle Spectre* and since then had played both comedy and tragedy. Melodramatic and tragic roles always remained her favorites, however, and figured prominently in her repertoire. She introduced the New Orleans audiences to Charles Maturin's *Bertram*, Young's *The Revenge*, Lewis' *Adelgitha*, John Brown's *Barbarossa*, Holcroft's *Tale of Mystery*, Sheridan's *Pizarro*, and Southerne's *Isabella*. In *The Revenge*, *Venice Preserved*, and *Adelgitha*, Phillips played opposite her.

Other plays introduced by the Turners were Hodgkinson's comedy, *The Man of Fortitude*; the burlettas, *Bombastes Furioso* by William Rhodes and *Tom Thumb* adapted from Henry Fielding by Kane O'Hara; and the farces, *Matrimony* by James Kenney and *The Prize* by Prince Hoare.

The last performance was announced for April 28, but when the vessel was delayed on which Turner had engaged passage for Liverpool, the season continued through May 17. The success of Turner's New Orleans venture is attested by his notice in the *Louisiana Gazette* of April 28.

Mr. Turner, truly grateful to the citizens of New Orleans for their very liberal encouragement of the present small theatrical corps, respectfully informs them that he intends

in a few days, embarking for Europe for the express purpose of procuring a full company of comedians whose talents, as performers, and conduct, as public citizens, he sincerely hopes will entitle them to public notice and patronage.

With Turner and Phillips both scouting for companies, another season of English drama was assured.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE SEASONS OF 1820 TO 1823

##### THE SEASON OF 1819-1820

The fall of 1819 brought several attempts to establish an American Theatre but William Turner did not return, and Aaron Phillips, busy recruiting players in the East, delayed his return until December. By that time James H. Caldwell, manager of several Virginia theatres, had announced that he would bring a troupe to New Orleans, and the city was awaiting his arrival.

The first dramatic notice of the season tells of a performance of *The Vampire* at the "English Opera House" on November 22. There were no subsequent notices to disclose the identity of this theatre, the length of its season, or any details of its management. A communication in the *Louisiana Gazette* of November 23 refers only to the magnificent scenery and to the "rapturous applause" which greeted the play and the announcement of a repetition.

Two days later *L'Ami des Lois* informed its readers that Mr. Allen, "from the principal Northern and Southern theatres," intended to give shortly at the St. Philip Street Theatre an entertainment entitled *An Evening Brush to Sweep Away Care, or Dum Vivimus Vitamus*. "Mr. Allen," stated the notice, "contemplates opening the St. Philip Street Theatre for the season, the moment he can raise a respectable company; the above entertainment is intended to assist him in the undertaking. N. B. Particulars in future advertisements." It is possible that this performance never took place; no other mention of Allen has been found. Undoubtedly he was the famous Andrew Jackson Allen who, because he had appeared on the New York stage in 1787, styled himself the "Father of the American Stage."<sup>1</sup>

The first week of January, 1820, found two American companies in New Orleans. At the new Orleans Theatre was Aaron

<sup>1</sup> Henry Pitt Phelps, *Players of a Century*, 227.

J. Phillips with a hastily recruited company; at the St. Philip Street Theatre were James H. Caldwell and his company, recently arrived from Charleston. Phillips announced in *L'Ami des Lois* of January 3 that he would commence the regular dramatic season with an English performance early in the ensuing week. As a "native American"—Caldwell was English—he asked for the encouragement and support that would enable him "to claim the distinguished honor of being the first to effect a permanent establishment of the English Drama in this city on a firm basis and correct principles." Prices of admission were to be \$1.50 for the first and second boxes, balcony, and private seats in the pit, and \$1.00 for the gallery and pit.

Two days later Phillips announced Otway's *Venice Preserved* and Allingham's farce, *The Weathercock*, for the opening bill on January 7. Carpender, "from the New York and Charleston Theatres," was to take the role of Pierre assisted by the Jaffier of Bartow, "from the New York and Philadelphia Theatres," and the Belvidera of Mrs. Smith, "from the Philadelphia and Baltimore Theatres." In the farce Phillips and Mrs. Monier, also from the Philadelphia and Baltimore Theatres, were cast as principals. Others listed in the notice were Benton, Abercrombie, Wilkie, Turner, Scrivener, and Drummond. Carpender's "sudden indisposition" forced the company to postpone its debut until the 8th when the Orleans Theatre was the scene of a "special celebration in commemoration of the glorious 8th of January, 1815."<sup>2</sup> Their presentation of T. Knight's *The Turnpike Gate* served as a curtain raiser for the opera, *Aline, Queen of Golconda*, given by the French company.

The second English performance at the Orleans Theatre on the 11th consisted of Home's tragedy, *Douglas*, and the younger Colman's farce, *The Review*. Mrs. Yates, "from the West Indies Theatre," made her appearance as Grace Gaylove in the latter.

Phillips now found it necessary to make a bid for public favor. "Understanding his first arrangement had not met, as he warmly anticipated, with their decided approbation and anxious in every point of view to meet their wishes," he announced a reduction in the admission: boxes and pit, \$1.00; gallery for people of color, \$.75. The new prices were to become effective

<sup>2</sup> On this date Andrew Jackson and his militiamen successfully defended New Orleans against a British force led by Sir Edward Packenham. Though the battle had no military value, peace having been signed on Christmas eve, the city always commemorated the event.

on the 15th, but the performance of that evening was postponed in consequence of the death of Mrs. Harris, a member of the troupe, and the "distressed situation" of Abercrombie, her brother.

Fortune had not favored Phillips since his arrival in New Orleans, and by this time he realized that he could not compete with the American company at the St. Philip Street Theatre. He had not been able to collect an audience; yet Caldwell's company was said to be "in full and successful operation."<sup>3</sup> In the *Louisiana Gazette* of January 19, Phillips announced that he and Caldwell had effected an arrangement in consequence of which he had been released from his previous engagement and would be given a benefit at the St. Philip Street Theatre on the 21st. With this performance he brought to a close his brief and unsuccessful career as an actor-manager in New Orleans.

The notice of a benefit performance, preserved in the Theatrical Collection of Harvard University, reveals that some of Phillips' company were still in the city on June 10. Of their activity during the interim between the disbanding of the troupe and this benefit for an actress named Mrs. Wilkie, nothing is known. It seems unlikely, however, that this was the beneficiary's first appearance. The program on this night consisted of *The Gamester*; hornpipes by Wilkie; and *Sylvester Daggerwood*. The casts included the Wilkies, Scrivener, Richards, Reynolds, Walters, Kenny, Bolton, and Mrs. Davis.

AMERICAN THEATRE, ST. PHILIP STREET, 1820

James H. Caldwell, the manager of the American company at the St. Philip Street Theatre, was an English actor who had made his American début at Charleston in 1816. His managerial career began in Washington, D. C., a year later, and in 1818 he built a theatre in Petersburg, Virginia. In the same year his company performed in Alexandria, Norfolk, Richmond, and Fredericksburg. He continued to visit the Virginia theatres each summer until 1825 when he withdrew from them to extend his interests to towns in the Southwest.<sup>4</sup> To these towns, unfamiliar with anything but the crude fare of small companies, he brought

<sup>3</sup> Clipping from newspaper dated January 15, 1820, Harvard University Theatrical Collection, Harvard Library.

<sup>4</sup> In the Theatrical Collection of Harvard University there is a letter to William Tayleure, October 24, 1833, in which Caldwell gives the details of his career in this country.

competent actors in the best of the standard plays and current novelties and soon made himself the most important figure in the theatrical world of this section.

The company which Caldwell brought to New Orleans in 1820 was stronger than any that had preceded it. The manager himself played the leads, both in tragedy and comedy, and Mrs. H. A. Williams and Mrs. William Anderson appeared opposite him. For the principal parts in opera and musical pieces he had engaged Mrs. Jackson Gray, formerly Miss Trajatta of New York, and Arthur Keene, an Irish tenor well known in the East. These two had able support from the singing actors, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Russell, Carr, Price, Boyle, Jones, and Petrie. The other members included Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hutton, Jackson Gray, Thomas Fielding, Emberton, Master McCafferty, William Anderson, and Mrs. Price. When Phillips' company at the Orleans Theatre disbanded, Entwistle and Mrs. Monier joined Caldwell. Goll, a dancer from the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, and more recently from the Park in New York, arrived late in January to direct the ballets and entertain between the pieces with his comic *pas seul*.

The American Company began its first season at the St. Philip Street Theatre, on January 7, with Tobin's *The Honey Moon* and Prince Hoare's farce, *The Three and the Deuce*. Caldwell's impersonations of the Duke Aranza and the Three Singles were enthusiastically received. Said the *Louisiana Gazette* on January 10: "Several good judges who have seen Mr. Cooper in the Duke were heard to declare that the latter did not play it so well; and in the cottage scene we are inclined to think it were impossible to surpass Mr. Caldwell's acting." Evidently this writer was not impressed by Mrs. Russell's Juliana or Mrs. Price's Volante; he did, however, comment favorably on Mrs. Russell's performance in the afterpiece as Taffline, "with the song of the Silken Sash." On the second night, Mrs. Gray and Jones made their bows as Rosina and Belville in Mrs. Brooke's musical drama, *Rosina*. Mr. and Mrs. Anderson came out on the 10th in Maturin's *Bertram* and on the 12th *Richard III* was given "for the purpose of introducing Mr. Hutton." Commented "Dramaticus" in the *Louisiana Gazette* of January 14: "These two tragedies did not entirely satisfy the public." The fault, it seems, lay with Anderson and Hutton, who had elected to make their débuts in parts which they could not sustain.

A more successful first appearance was that of Arthur Keene in Bishop's popular opera, *The Devil's Bridge*. Caldwell reappeared as Belcour in Cumberland's comedy, *The West Indian*, on the 15th, and on the 17th he essayed Hamlet. The French critic who reviewed the latter performance in the *Louisiana Gazette* (January 19) praised Caldwell's acting. He was surprised though that so little attention had been paid to the costumes. He notes that some of the Danish courtiers were dressed as Hussars and others as chevaliers, while the sailors wore the uniform of the United States Navy.

For his benefit on the 21st, Phillips, "late of the Orleans Theatre," played Romeo to the Juliet of Mrs. Williams and the Mercutio of Caldwell. Goll made his bow on this evening and the bill concluded with Charles Coffey's *The Devil to Pay*, a farce new to the city. These were interesting nights at the St. Philip Street Theatre. Entwistle came out on the 22nd as Tyke in *The School of Reform* and as Sam in *Raising the Wind*. The next evening brought the first native play of the season, John Howard Payne's *Brutus, or The Fall of Tarquin*. Another novelty was *The Green Man*, a comedy adapted from the French by Richard Jones. *Hamlet* was repeated on the 26th, Bartow, who had come to New Orleans in Phillips' troupe, making "his first appearance in this city" as the melancholy Dane. He appeared next as Young Norval and concluded his engagement with a benefit performance as Frederic Bramble in *The Poor Gentleman*.

Meanwhile the company continued to bring out pieces which were new to the city: *Guy Mannering*, with Keene as Henry Bertram; the melodramatic spectacle, *The Forty Thieves*; Holcroft's comedy, *The Road to Ruin*; and Dibdin's opera, *Lodoiska*. On February 5 came Cobb's *Paul and Virginia*, and in rapid succession followed *The Rendezvous*, a new operatic farce by Ayton, Thomas Morton's melodrama, *The Children in the Wood*, T. J. Dibdin's *The Lady of the Lake*, and Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*.

On February 14 Caldwell announced that "through the medium of his friends" he had arranged to use the Orleans Theatre. He had done this, stated the notice in the *Louisiana Gazette*, "in obedience to the wishes of many respectable families, and particularly with a desire on his part of gratifying the expectations of the French population." The move brought no change in the managerial policy. Doors opened at half past five;

the curtain rose an hour later. In this theatre, however, performances could be given only four times a week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, since the French company occupied the house on the other three nights. For a short time he continued to use the St. Philip Street Theatre on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but these performances were not scheduled regularly.

Caldwell commenced his activities at the Orleans Theatre with the bill which had introduced his company, *The Honey Moon* and *The Three and the Deuce*. The first novelty was *Macbeth* on the 21st, followed by one of Goll's ballets entitled "The Jovial Millers." As the French company was using the theatre on Washington's Birthday, Caldwell took the company to the St. Philip Street house where they celebrated with Dunlap's *Glory of Columbia*, *Her Yeomanry*; a musical interlude, "The Feast of Apollo"; and a ballet. The novelties continued at the Orleans Theatre with Bickerstaff's *Padlock* and *Love in a Village*; Beazley's farce, *The Boarding House*; and O'Keeff's *Highland Reel*. Caldwell's benefit, on March 6, presented "for the first time in New Orleans" a harlequinade entitled "The House that Jack Built."

The most popular of the season's plays was M. M. Noah's *She Would Be a Soldier, or The Plains of Chippewa*, brought out on March 10. It was repeated the next night and by the end of the season had attained four performances. The critic "Wagstaff" in a communication printed in the *Louisiana Gazette* of the 16th expressed the belief that no other play had been received with such universal applause. "While our country can boast of such writers as Mr. Noah," stated the critic, "we see no necessity for our importing British Literature and British plays 'by the bale and by the hogshead'."

The benefits commenced on March 15 when Russell offered *The Rivals* and the melodrama, *The Honest Thieves*. Most of the pieces given on these nights had not been previously acted here. Fielding presented O'Keeffe's comedy, *Wild Oats*, and Mrs. Russell brought out three novelties: Mrs. Centlivre's *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret*; an alteration of Colman's *New Hay at the Old Market*, entitled *Sylvester Daggerwood*; and Prince Hoare's operatic farce, *Lock and Key*. *Much Ado about Nothing* and a revival of *Ella Rosenberg* comprised Mrs. Anderson's bill.

Goll offered a "first time" performance of Shield's tragedy, *The Apostate*, and T. J. Dibdin's *Don Giovanni*, "a comic, heroic, operatic, tragic, pantomimic burletta spectacular extravaganza taken from the celebrated pantomime of *Don Juan*."

Gray introduced Thomas Morton's *Town and Country* on his night, and Master McCafferty's bill concluded with *The Forest of Bondy, or The Dog of Montargis*, a melodrama new to the city. According to the press this was a failure as the dog was overcome by a timidity which prevented its barking. More successful was the début of April 11 when "the living elephant" appeared in the melodramatic *Blue Beard* of George Colman the younger. For a month the beast had suffered the public gaze at Mr. Chardon's on Jefferson Street; consequently she performed with "*l'aplomb*."

Other important presentations of these last two weeks were J. N. Barker's spectacle, *Marmion* (April 12), Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, and Moore's tragedy, *The Gamester*. The notice of this last, on April 15, announced "in preparation for the benefit of Mr. Caldwell a new play called *The Bride of Lammermoor*, written by a gentleman of New Orleans." On the 19th, the night of the benefit and the last of the season, the play was again advertised. Almost a year later a communication in the *Louisiana Gazette* (March 1, 1821) mentioned that the piece had been postponed "under disagreeable circumstances" and as yet had not been given.

Reports differ as to the financial success of the season. Caldwell stated in a letter which James Rees published in the *Dramatic Authors of America* that after paying all of his expenses, including those of the voyage back to Virginia, he had a balance of \$1,740.<sup>5</sup> A communication in the *Louisiana Gazette* of March 29, 1821, declared that Caldwell in his expense account for the 1820 season had charged a hundred dollars a night for his own personal services, "hence, deceptively lowering what he is pleased to call 'amount of profit.'" Continued the writer: "This for the twelve weeks which he played last season would be \$4,800 which, added to what he shows as profit, would be \$6,540, the clear gain carried away from the purses of the liberal, generous citizens of New Orleans."

Whatever the profits, they were large enough to convince Caldwell that New Orleans should be added to his theatrical

<sup>5</sup> P. 55.

circuit. Before he left with his company for the summer campaign in Virginia, he took a three-year lease on the Orleans Theatre at \$10,000 a year.<sup>6</sup>

AMERICAN THEATRE, ORLEANS STREET, 1821

Late in January of 1821 Caldwell and his company arrived from Charleston. Of those who had appeared during the previous season Mr. and Mrs. Price, Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Gray, Boyle, Petrie, and Carr did not return. Their places were more than adequately taken, however, by the new recruits, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Burke, Mrs. Entwistle, Mrs. Legg, Thomas Jefferson, Judah, Brennan, Hanna, and Miss Eliza Placide. Mrs. Burke, who replaced Mrs. Gray, had been a popular actress at the Park Theatre in New York and was still, in Noah Ludlow's opinion, "unsurpassed in her singing of ballads or in English opera by any one in the United States."<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Entwistle, formerly Mrs. Mason, had also been a favorite at the Park, captivating all who saw her in high comedy. Later she will figure in these annals as Mrs. Crooke.

Caldwell opened his season at the Orleans Theatre on January 31 with *The Soldier's Daughter* and *The Liar*. In the former Mrs. Entwistle appeared as the Widow Cheerly, a role which had been associated with her name since her American début in 1809. Caldwell enacted Frank Heartall and was Young Wilding in the afterpiece. Mrs. Burke came out on February 5 in *The Devil's Bridge* and *The Spoiled Child*. On her second night she enacted Julia Mannering to Keene's Henry Bertram and Variella in the afterpiece, *The Weathercock*. She was Rosetta in *Love in a Village*, Maria in *Of Age To-morrow*, Agnes to Caldwell's Octavian in *The Mountaineers* and for her first benefit (February 23) Araminta in O'Keeffe's musical farce, *The Young Quaker*. Meanwhile Mrs. Entwistle had played opposite Caldwell in *Much Ado about Nothing*, *The School for Scandal*, and *Pizarro*. On the 24th Colman's comedy, *The Jealous Wife*, was brought out, Mrs. Entwistle and Caldwell in the leads.

The first important novelty of the season was Sheridan Knowles' tragedy, *Virginius, or A Roman Sacrifice*, presented on February 26. The afterpiece on this evening was *Beaux Without Belles*, a farce by an American, David Darling. For his benefit on March 2, Caldwell offered *Lear* and a slack rope exhibition by

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>7</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 216.

Williams. This was an unfortunate choice which led not only to a severe criticism of the performance but to a general condemnation of the manager and the company. "Crito" in the *Louisiana Advertiser* of March 6 expressed displeasure that Caldwell had permitted the exhibition immediately after the tragedy. Two days later the *Louisiana Gazette* printed a reply to "Crito." Declared this commentator: "For ourselves as the Theatre has been degraded, we hope Mr. Caldwell will do as he pleases. We believe the public would be pleased to see more of his Company on the Rope, and we are certain that some of them would do it more honor than they do the Drama."

The newspaper files for this season are woefully incomplete, making it impossible to give a complete record of the performances. According to the extant advertisements, Caldwell turned to lighter fare after his failure with *Lear*. The few notices of the next two weeks show premières of Farquhar's *The Inconstant*, Morton's musical *Henri Quatre*, and Pocock's *John of Paris*.

The outstanding event of the season was the visit of the tragedian, Thomas A. Cooper. Caldwell says that he was engaged at the enormous sum of \$3,333.33 for sixteen nights, and that the engagement was extended to twenty-four nights.<sup>8</sup> He made his bow on March 23 as Macbeth and, assisted by Mrs. Entwistle, went through a round of characters which had long been associated with his name: Leon in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* ("first time in New Orleans"), Pierre to Caldwell's Jaffier in *Venice Preserved*, Hamlet (to Mrs. Burke's Ophelia), Virginius, and Othello. On his benefit night, April 9, he played Bertram in Maturin's tragedy and recited the ode "Alexander's Feast." Though he had been announced "for ten nights only," on the 11th he began a second engagement as Marc Antony in *Julius Caesar*, following it with *The Gamester*, *The Robbers*, and *Virginius* (for the third time). The records of the next five performances are missing, and as yet, there is no proof that Cooper's engagement was extended to twenty-four nights as Caldwell asserts.

On the evenings when Cooper appeared, the admission to the boxes and parquet was raised to \$1.50, an advance which Caldwell said was "occasioned by the increased expenses of the manager's already heavy establishment attendant upon Mr. Cooper's

<sup>8</sup> Rees, *op. cit.*, 55.

engagement." When the indignant public asked for an accounting of these expenses, a "particular friend" of Caldwell's tried to appease them by explaining that the raise in price would prevent the greasy Kentuckians and the rabble from leaning over the backs of the boxes to the great annoyance of the ladies.<sup>9</sup> Two days later the *Louisiana Advertiser* carried Caldwell's statement that he had made the new price "to fill his coffers from the high pitch of curiosity raised by the engagement of Mr. Cooper."

Several novelties were brought out in April: O'Keeffe's farce, *Modern Antiques*, on the 4th and Dimond's opera, *Brother and Sister*, on the 27th. In the afterpiece, *The Liar*, on the 27th, Young Wilding was played by N. M. Ludlow "from the Western Theatre." This actor had stopped in New Orleans on his way to establish a theatre in Pensacola and, on finding that Caldwell needed someone for juvenile tragedy and first genteel comedy, had decided to remain.<sup>10</sup>

Mrs. Entwistle's benefit on May 2 presented, for the first time in New Orleans, Colley Cibber's comedy, *The Provoked Husband*, followed by *The American Captive*. Sometime within two weeks of this performance her husband died and she was allowed another benefit to help defray funeral expenses. She had been a popular member of the company and one of the few to win enthusiastic praise from French and English critics alike. Now, however, she incurred displeasure by offering as the main play on this benefit bill, Morton's comedy, *The Way to Get Married*. Noted the French critic in the *Louisiana Gazette* of May 18, "Under the circumstances the play was badly chosen."

Keene selected *Laugh When You Can* and *The Lady of the Lake* for his night, May 12. In the Scott adaptation he played Allan Bane; Ludlow was Fitz-James, Mrs. Burke was Blanche of Devon, and Mrs. Williams was Ellen. The advertisement of this event stated that the season would end on Monday, May 14, with a benefit for Mr. West. This actor had not been mentioned in any of the other notices this season and of his offerings on the 14th nothing is known.

The incompleteness of the records for 1821 makes impossible any statement as to the merit of the repertoire which Caldwell offered during his second season in New Orleans. Caldwell him-

<sup>9</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, March 26, 1821.

<sup>10</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 215.

self dated his success in the South as beginning this year with the engagement of Thomas Cooper. He wrote James Rees in 1845:

I conceived the idea of drawing our great tragedian, Cooper, to share with me in an engagement. . . . I succeeded and from that day the drama assumed a tone which has spread through the whole valley of the Mississippi. From that day I have wielded the tinsel sceptre and commanded to the South and West, every distinguished member of the profession who has sought these shores. . . .<sup>11</sup>

THE SEASON OF 1821-1822

Early in November of 1821 a company of comedians arrived in the city. The notice in the *Louisiana Gazette* of the 6th stated that they had been playing at Pensacola under the management of Mr. Allen and would open the winter campaign the next week in the St. Philip Theatre. It was reported that while the theatre was being altered and repaired, the managers were looking for actresses to fill the places recently left vacant by the deaths of Mrs. Price and Mrs. Vaughan, two of their number.

The next week saw a performance by one member of the little troupe. On Saturday, November 17, Vaughan ascended the rostrum in the "large room" of Mr. Elkin's Hotel in Chartres Street and delivered a "Serious, Moral, and Sarcastic Lecture—in three parts. Written to Dilate and Ridicule the Vices, Follies, Manners and Customs of the Mincing World; Interspersed with Serious and Comic Songs." The following Tuesday the *Louisiana Gazette* announced that Vaughan, Biglow, and Allen, "managers of the New Orleans Theatre, St. Philip Street," would open their doors in the course of the ensuing week. They promised tragedy, comedy, opera, melodrama, farce, pantomime, and the ballet by a company "in point of numbers capable of performing any piece and they trust, in point of talent, adequate to the attempt."

Apparently the prospective managers had not made definite arrangements with Coquet, the owner of the St. Philip, for the day after their announcement his card in the *Louisiana Gazette* informed the public that the St. Philip stage was being altered into a circus and "it was not contemplated or even possible to give scenic representations there for a month or six weeks to come." On the 24th Victor Pepin took over the theatre for his

<sup>11</sup> Rees, *op. cit.*, 53.

equestrian and gymnastic exercises. He did not remain there long, however, and in February after he moved into new quarters, the stage was again used for dramatic performances.

According to Paxton's *Directory of New Orleans*, published in 1822, the theatre was used by both English and French companies during the year. It is not unlikely that Allen's troupe returned to the city in the spring and occupied the theatre at this time. There seems to be evidence for this supposition in the *Louisiana Gazette's* announcement on April 23 that the players of "both American companies" had volunteered their services for a benefit to be held at the St. Philip Theatre on the 24th. The beneficiary was Mrs. De Grush, formerly the wife of Thomas Morgan, who had played here with Ludlow in 1818. It was said that she had come to New Orleans expecting to be engaged by Caldwell and had been disappointed.

AMERICAN THEATRE, ORLEANS STREET, 1821-1822

In attempting to trace the course of Caldwell's third season at the Orleans Street Theatre, we must turn to Ludlow's *Dramatic Life As I Found It* and to James Rees' *Dramatic Authors of America*. The only newspapers available for reference, the *Louisiana Gazette* and *L'Ami des Lois*, carry few theatrical advertisements and critiques.

The personnel of the company, as culled from the newspaper notices, included James H. Caldwell, Vaughan, J. M. Scott, Jackson Gray, Thomas Jefferson, Judah, James Scholes, Ludlow, Russell, Benton, McCafferty, Hughes, and Boyle, Mesdames Anderson and Russell and Misses Eliza Placide and Tilden. Except for the names of West and Mrs. Hughes, which are omitted here, the list coincides with that given by Rees.<sup>12</sup> Ludlow's roster of the company is valueless; it tallies in a few respects with the above, but the majority of those he names did not come to New Orleans until the fall of 1822.

As in the past, the American company shared the theatre with a French troupe and played only on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. The price of admission at the beginning of the season was \$1.50, but after several months the old price of a dollar was reestablished. In a letter to the *Louisiana Gazette*, published in the issue of November 19, one who signed himself "Crito" had objected to the new price on the ground that three-

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

fourths of the audience would be composed of "that grade in society who have to depend upon their labour for obtaining their bread." He said that the chief support of the theatre came from greasy Kentuckians, Yankee dealers, shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, bricklayers, cabinet makers, hatters, blacksmiths, saddlers, clerks, customhouse officers, captains of vessels, sailors, and daily laborers.

The season at the American Theatre on Orleans Street began on December 10 with *The Honey Moon* and *The Three and the Deuce*. The next night H. M. Milman's tragedy, *Fazio*, introduced Mr. and Mrs. Hughes, the most important of the new recruits. Apparently Mrs. Hughes had been engaged to replace Mrs. Entwistle as leading lady. As Mrs. Young she had been well-known in Albany and New York. In later years she and her husband, a clever actor in heavy parts, were favorites at the Chatham in New York. On the 19th Thomas Hilson made his bow as Tyke in *The School of Reform* and as Somno in *The Sleep Walker*. Ludlow says that the comedian remained for a three weeks' engagement, playing each night to well-filled houses.

Junius Brutus Booth is the next star mentioned by Ludlow and Rees. Ludlow asserts that he made his New Orleans debut on January 11, opening, as was his custom, in *Richard III*. Other plays in which he is said to have appeared were the Younger Colman's *The Iron Chest*; *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*; and *The Distressed Mother*, a translation of Racine's *Andromache* by Ambrose Philips.

Thomas Cooper began an engagement on February 6 when he appeared as Richard III. According to Ludlow this was followed by *Othello*, *Virginus*, Shiel's *Damon and Pythias*, first time here, and *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*. The newspapers refer to a performance of Lee's *Alexander the Great* and of *Zaire*, a translation from Voltaire by H. Hill, given for his benefit on March 27.

Apparently there were several nights in March when Cooper did not perform. A notice in the *Louisiana Gazette* of March 14 tells of a six nights' engagement with Victor Pepin and his horses. During this time Caldwell brought out *Timour the Tartar* and *Lodoiska*, and after Cooper's departure the horses were reengaged for other equestrian dramas.

Little is known of the last two months of the season. The benefits commenced early in March, says Ludlow, and his was about the fourth or fifth. It was on this occasion that he came out dressed in buckskin shirt and leggings, moccasins, and slouched hat, and to a familiar air sang Samuel Woodworth's "The Hunters of Kentucky." Shouts and Indian yells from the flatboatmen in the pit greeted the verses:

For Jackson he was wide awake, and wasn't scar'd at trifles,  
For well he knew what aim we take with our Kentucky rifles;  
So he led us down to Cypress Swamp, the ground was low  
and mucky

There stood John Bull in martial pomp; *but here was old  
Kentucky!*<sup>13</sup>

As the season neared its end, Caldwell began to plan for the establishment of a permanent American theatre in New Orleans.<sup>14</sup> This was not the first time the idea had been advanced. As early as 1819 it had been suggested that a theatre "in the upper part of the city" would draw the English-speaking population.<sup>15</sup> The following year Ludlow's friend, Nathan Morse, and "a number of respectable citizens" purchased land on the corner of Canal and St. Charles Streets, "with the sole object of erecting thereon a spacious and elegant theatre constructed in such a manner as will render it of public utility and an ornament to the city."<sup>16</sup> When the mayor and the city council refused to grant their request for an extension of time for the payment of the lots,<sup>17</sup> the plans for the theatre were abandoned. In the fall of 1821 there was again talk of building a theatre in the American section of the city, the Faubourg St. Mary,<sup>18</sup> but nothing came of it.

The success which attended Caldwell during his first three seasons in New Orleans proved to him that the Americans were eager for their own theatre and could easily support it. At the cost of \$18,000 he purchased two lots in the Faubourg St. Mary, on the west side of Camp Street between Gravier and Poydras.<sup>19</sup> There on May 30, 1822, he laid the cornerstone of the "New American Theatre."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Constance Rourke, *American Humor*, 35.

<sup>14</sup> *Louisiana Gazette*, November 19, 1821.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, March 19, 1819.

<sup>16</sup> Petition in Vol. III, Book III of the *Conseil de Ville*, Cabildo, New Orleans.

<sup>17</sup> Session of the *Conseil de Ville*, March 20, 1820, Vol. III, Book III, Cabildo, New Orleans.

<sup>18</sup> *Louisiana Gazette*, December 19, 1821.

<sup>19</sup> Notarial Acts of Hughes Lavergne, No. 1163, Court House, New Orleans.

<sup>20</sup> *Louisiana Gazette*, May 31, 1822.

## AMERICAN THEATRE, ORLEANS STREET, 1823

The American company began its last season in the Orleans Theatre on January 4, 1823. Caldwell's lease on the theatre did not expire until June, and for that reason he had made no attempt to complete the "New American Theatre" on Camp Street.

The company was a large one, including among its members Caldwell, Russell, Ludlow, Gray, Benton, McCafferty, Petrie, Taylor, Scholes, Mesdames Russell and Higgins, and the new recruits Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Drake, Mr. and Mrs. Bloxton, William Forrest, Edwin Caldwell, Williams, Garner, Lewis, Hays, Mesdames Baker, Ludlow, and Noke, and the Misses Rosina Seymour (later Mrs. James Rowe) and Jane Placide. Richard Russell was stage manager; James Rowe, treasurer; John Higgins, prompter; and Noke, leader of the orchestra.

The opening bill, *The Road to Ruin* and *The Reapers*, introduced several of the new members. The *Louisiana Gazette* (January 6) in a critique of this presentation reported that William Forrest "sunk under the task" of performing the difficult role of Harry Dornton. This actor, the elder brother of Edwin Forrest and later a well known manager in Philadelphia, was just starting on his career and much unfavorable criticism was directed at his acting throughout this first season in New Orleans. Williams made a more successful début; his Silky "repeatedly exercised the risible faculties of the audience." But of all the personations in the comedy the *Louisiana Gazette's* critic regarded the Sophia of the newcomer, Jane Placide, as the best. He also praised Garner's performance as Belville in *The Reapers*, finding his voice "remarkable for the sweetness of its tones and harmony and albeit none of the strongest . . . infinitely more pleasing to our ears than the loud bawling and straining of other singers."

The second evening presented Mrs. Baker in the role of Miss Hardcastle, assisted by Williams as Tony Lumpkin and Caldwell as Young Marlow. In the afterpiece, *The Poor Soldier*, Mrs. Noke made her bow as Norah to Williams' Darby. The advertisements for this performance do not tell what role was played by Jane Placide, but according to the *Louisiana Gazette* of January 8, her "acting possessed, as usual, all the raciness of connoisseurship."

The first novelty of the season was Frederick Reynolds' *Folly as It Flies*, presented on January 10 with Caldwell, Jane Placide, and Rosina Seymour in the leads. In the *School for*

*Scandal* on the 11th, Lewis, "from the Western theatres," made his first appearance as Joseph Surface to the Charles of Caldwell and the Lady Teazle of Mrs. Baker. There was no afterpiece on this evening but "at the solicitation of several families" Dr. Preston exhibited nitrous oxide or exhilarating gas.

The operatic *John of Paris* was given on the 14th with Garner in the name part, Miss Seymour as Rosa, and Jane Placide as the Princess of Navarre. It has been said that of all the players who came to New Orleans, whether as members of the resident company or as stars, none was more popular than Jane Placide. Knowing of her importance in the theatrical history of the city, one reads with especial interest the comments which were printed in the *Louisiana Gazette* on January 17.

Miss Placide . . . did not seem quite at home in mimicking the walk and gesture of royalty—the rolling motion which sets off a chambermaid does not become a queen. Miss Placide, we hope, will pardon these hints—they cannot affect the estimation which real merit has secured to her in the walks of the drama. With an eye full of meaning and a whole countenance equally expressive, Miss Placide may soar above opera singing. By a little care to study the proper attitudes and diligent study of the tragic muse, she would probably in Lady Macbeth, Cordelia, Jane Shore, and other similar parts, give as much satisfaction as she now does in light comedy.

Two novelties were offered on the 18th, M. M. Noah's *Wandering Boys* and William Diamond's *The Lady and the Devil*. Miss Seymour and Jane Placide made a hit in their portrayals of the boys, Justin and Paul, and the piece became the most popular of the season, attaining some five performances. Second in favor was C. E. Walker's melodrama, *The Warlock of the Glen*, presented first on the 20th and repeated on the 24th after a performance of *Hamlet*. With the last night of the month came another novelty, John O'Keeffe's comic opera, *The Agreeable Surprise*.

The first week in February brought Arthur Murphy's comedy, *Know Your Own Mind*, and Isaac Bickerstaff's *Lionel and Clarissa*, an opera "now performing in northern theatres with unbounded applause." On the 8th Mr. and Mrs. Russell made their first appearance of the season, he as Timothy Quaint to her Widow Cheerly in *The Soldier's Daughter*, and as Crack to her

Peggy in *The Turnpike Gate*. Two nights later Isaac Pocock's musical drama *Rob Roy Macgregor* was introduced with Caldwell in the title role and Jane Placide as Diana Vernon.

The company was now strengthened by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Drake, "from the Western Theatres." She made her début on the 12th as Portia to Caldwell's Shylock and as Lucy Racket to his Sir Charles in the farce, *Three Weeks after Marriage*. Drake appeared on the 14th as L'Eclair in *The Foundling of the Forest* and as Sharp in *The Lying Valet*. Mrs. Drake now played Mrs. Beverly in *The Gamester* and on her third appearance replaced Mrs. Baker as Helen M'Gregor in *Rob Roy*, her husband on the latter occasion following as Lingo in *The Agreeable Surprise*.

It was traditional with the American companies in New Orleans to offer special bills on national holidays, and on Washington's Birthday the management brought out Thomas Morton's *Columbus* and Isaac Pocock's *For Freedom Ho!*, a melodramatic opera which had been introduced at Caldwell's benefit earlier in the month.

As February drew to a close, Caldwell announced the engagement of Master C. F. Smith and his sister. The youthful star opened on the 26th as Frederick in *Lovers' Vows* and followed it with Romeo, Octavian (*The Mountaineers*), Captain Flash (*Miss in Her Teens*), Richard III, Selim (*Barbarossa*), Young Norval, Darby (*The Poor Soldier*), and *Hamlet*, this last for his benefit on March 12. Miss Smith made her bow as Juliet, thereafter playing opposite her brother in *The Mountaineers* and *Barbarossa*. On her night, the two enacted Rolla and Cora in *Pizarro*.

Caldwell planned a special bill for March 17, offering, "in compliment to the day so fondly cherished by a sister country," Mrs. Lanfau's comedy, *The Sons of Erin*, and Richard Sheridan's *St. Patrick Day*. John Dwyer, the light comedian, came on the 19th in *Laugh When You Can*. The announcement of the comedy stated that he was to perform only one night, his engagement having been "unavoidably though mutually curtailed." Apparently this was done that Thomas Cooper might begin his twelve night engagement on the 21st. The tragedian went through a familiar repertoire with the exception of *King John* on April 4 and *The*

*Fair Penitent* on the 11th. He had excellent support in Mrs. Drake, Jane Placide, and Mrs. Rowe (formerly Miss Rosina Seymour).

Cooper left for Natchez after his appearance at Caldwell's benefit on April 14 and with him went Mrs. Drake, Ludlow, and others of the New Orleans troupe under the direction of W. H. Benton. Both Ludlow and James Rees tell of this Natchez visit in their histories, but neither gives a complete account of the company. According to these authorities a large hotel room was the only convenient place that could be obtained; and here Caldwell sent the stars after they completed their New Orleans engagements.<sup>21</sup>

Dwyer returned on April 12 as Belcour in *The West Indian*; he was seen on the 23rd as Charles Surface and for the last time on the 30th as Young Rapid in *A Cure for the Heartache*. On the latter occasion John Dalton, "Principal Comedian of the Charleston, Savannah and Augusta Theatres," assisted as Frank Otland and was featured in Mrs. Inchbald's *Ruse contre Ruse* which served as the afterpiece.

A more important visitor than either of these comedians was Thomas Phillips, the singing actor. On his opening night, April 14, he and Jane Placide were Count Belino and Rosalina in *The Devil's Bridge*. This was repeated on the 16th, and on the 18th, he introduced *Fontainebleau*, a comic opera by John O'Keeffe. As bad weather had kept many from attending the theatre during the first nights of his visit, he was reengaged for two more performances, appearing in *The Barber of Seville* and in Tom Moore's *M. P., or The Blue Stocking*.

The benefits this season began on May 2 with Master Smith's presentation of Thomson's tragedy, *Tancred and Sigismundi*, and *The Three and the Deuce*. Between the pieces the beneficiary recited Southey's poem, "Mary, the Maid of the Inn," and delivered a farewell address, written by himself. Of the other benefits only Drake's need be mentioned. On his night the comedian played Pizarro to the Rolla of William Pelby, "from the Philadelphia, Boston and New York Theatres," and the Elvira of Jane Placide. With Gray's benefit on May 9, Caldwell ended his stay in the Orleans Theatre. Henceforth this establishment was to be occupied only by French companies.

<sup>21</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 245; Rees, *op. cit.*, 59.

## NEW AMERICAN THEATRE, CAMP STREET, 1823

The New American Theatre on Camp Street was still unfinished when Caldwell opened it on May 14 with a performance of *The Dramatist* and *The Romp*. He explained to the public in the *Louisiana Gazette* (May 12) that he did this "in order to avoid those defects which have been found to exist in many theatres where the precaution has not been taken of ascertaining how far the construction of the building was sufficient for a complete opportunity of seeing and hearing in every part of the house devoted to the audience."

Caldwell offered excellent entertainment during these last two weeks of the season. Such standard plays as *The Honey Moon*, *The Mountaineers*, *The Wheel of Fortune*, and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, were followed by popular farces featuring Drake and Russell. Dalton made his second appearance on the 24th as Crack in *The Turnpike Gate*. On several nights, between the play and the afterpiece, there was exhibited "an experiment of the manner of lighting the theatre with gas." A benefit for Master Smith ended the season on May 28. The program included *Lovers' Vows*, Miss Smith as Amelia, and *No Song, No Supper* with Garner as Frederick and Jane Placide as Margareta.

In previous years Caldwell had taken the company to Virginia for the summer campaign. This year at the conclusion of the Natchez season the New Orleans and Natchez troupes were reorganized as one company and proceeded to Nashville under the direction of Richard Russell.<sup>22</sup>

## CHAPTER IV

## THE SEASONS OF 1824 TO 1833

## AMERICAN THEATRE, CAMP STREET, 1824

The American Theatre on Camp Street, advertised for a short time as the New American, was formally opened on January 1, 1824. It was a building sixty by one hundred and sixty feet with a seating capacity of 1,000 and had been erected at a cost of \$70,000. Joe Cowell described it as "one of the prettiest of theatres" and noted that it was better adapted to the peculiar climate of New Orleans than any he had ever seen.<sup>1</sup> The only extant picture of the theatre shows a substantial brick building, three

<sup>22</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 249.

<sup>1</sup> *Thirty Years Passed among the Players in England and America*, Part II, p. 95.

stories high, with a facade in the Doric order, a flight of marble steps extending across it. This was intersected by four marble piers upon each of which was a cast iron tripod supporting a brilliantly illuminated lamp.

The newspapers carried no descriptions of the building or of the interior decorations. There is only the statement in the *Louisiana Gazette* of January 3: "The audience part is neatly fitted up and when entirely oramented will, we think, be inferior to none in the U. S. The Chandelier is of very elegant construction and was splendidly illuminated with Gas—as were the foot-lights of the Stage."

Caldwell announced that the distribution of the house and the price of admission had been made "in compliance with the wishes of every part of the community." Boxes and parquet were a dollar; pit, seventy-five cents; and gallery, fifty cents. The left side of the third tier was "appropriated exclusively to the colored population" with boxes a dollar and other seats, twenty-five cents. Performances took place regularly on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, and sometimes on Thursday. During four weeks of the season they were scheduled for every night except Sunday. The doors opened at six; the curtain rose at seven.

The staff of the theatre consisted of Caldwell, manager; Richard Russell, prompter; John Varden, stage machinist; Symons, engineer of the Gas Department; and Antonio Mondelli, scene painter. In the resident company were Russell, Ludlow, William Forrest, Edwin Caldwell, Gary, Garner, McCafferty, Scholes, Mesdames Baker, Rowe, Russell, Higgins, Ludlow, Noke, and Bloxton, and Miss Jane Placide. New members were Joseph Page, Moses Scott, John Dalton, George Frethy, Samuel P. Jones, Edwin Forrest, and Mrs. Mongin.

The entertainment of the first evening, January 1, 1824, commenced with Caldwell's recitation of the prize poem written by Thomas Wells of Boston. The most interesting of its lines are the concluding ones which prophesy the future of the American drama.

On rapid wings still speeds the auspicious time,  
When Bards our own the Olympic Mount shall climb;  
When round their consecrated shrines shall throng  
*Our* buskined Heroes, and *our* sons of *Song*;  
In Attic pride *our* Drama then shall rise,  
And nobly daring, claim the Thespian prize:  
To classic height exalt the rising age,  
And give, to peerless, lasting fame, the Stage.<sup>2</sup>

This was followed by the popular *Town and Country* and *Of Age Tomorrow*. The parts of Goody Hawbuck and Ross in the comedy were enacted by the new recruits, Mrs. Mongin and Scott. John Dalton made his bow, on the 3rd, as Tyke in *The School of Reform* and as Crack in *The Turnpike Gate*.

The first novelty of this season was Noah's *Marion, or The Hero of Lake George*, presented on January 8. Two days later came the première of Moncrieff's farce, *Monsieur Tonson*, and on the 12th, Holcroft's comedy, *The Deserted Daughter*, and O'Keeffe's *Sprigs of Laurel*. On this evening Joseph Page, a singing actor, "from the Charleston and Richmond Theatres," made his first appearance, playing Douglas in the comedy and Nipperkin in the farce.

William Pelby, the American tragedian, began an engagement on January 16 as Macbeth to the Lady Macbeth of Mrs. Baker. He enacted Virginius on the following night, and then appeared successively as Hamlet, Marc Antony, Damon, Petruchio, Brutus (in Payne's play of that name), and Rolla (*Pizarro*). In all of these except Petruchio he was supported by Jane Placide, who seems to have been promoted to the position of leading lady this season. On the 30th she and Caldwell personated Abaellino and Rosamonda in Dunlap's melodrama, *Abaellino*, and in *Guy Mannering* the next evening she was Meg Merriles, Mrs. Rowe making her first appearance of the season as Julia.

A new member of the company made his début on February 4, choosing Jaffier in *Venice Preserved* for his initial appearance. In the notices of this first performance he was listed as "E. Forrest, from the Ohio and Kentucky Theatres." Five years later he was to return to New Orleans heralded as "the greatest American tragedian." On his second appearance Edwin Forrest enacted

<sup>2</sup> Rees, *op. cit.*, 61.

Dorlin in the local première of John Howard Payne's *Adeline*, and on his third he was Raymond in J. Stokes' *Forest of Rosenwald*, another novelty.

Pelby returned on the 12th as Charles de Moore in *The Robbers*, Edwin Forrest playing Francis de Moore, and Mrs. Rowe, Amelia. The star next appeared as Bertrand in *The Foundling of the Forest*, and at Caldwell's benefit, on the 14th, he played the name part in James Haynes' new tragedy, *Durazzo*. It was announced that Pelby was detained in town by "an unavoidable accident" which had damaged the vessel on which he was sailing for Charleston, and on the 24th he began a second engagement. The benefit which concluded his stay on February 26 introduced *Riches, or Wife and Brother*, an adaptation of Massinger's *City Madame* by Sir James Bland Burges.

Other novelties of this month were John Poole's popular farce, *Simpson and Company*; George Soane's melodrama, *The Falls of Clyde*, Edwin Forrest in the role of Edward Enfield; and Charles Lamb's *Mr. H*.

March came in with the revival of *The West Indian* and Douglas Jerrold's new burlesque, *Dolly and the Rat*. William Dimond's melodramatic spectacle, *The Aethiop*, was brought out on the 5th, with Caldwell in the title role and Edwin Forrest as Almanzo. Alexander Wilson, "from the Western theatres," made his bow the next evening in *Bertram* as Bertram to Jane Placide's Imogine and as Monsieur Morbleu (*Monsieur Tonson*). During his engagement Wilson appeared in *The Iron Chest*, *The Turn Out*, *Alexander the Great*, *Who Wants a Guinea?*, and *Othello*.

On nights when Wilson was not performing, Caldwell sought to attract the public with new plays. He brought out Isaac Pock's musical farce, *Hit or Miss*, on the 12th; on St. Patrick's Day the bill ended with O'Keeffe's *Love in a Camp*, a sequel to *The Poor Soldier*. The offering on the 19th was *Richard III*, "altered and amended from Colly Cibber's edition, and original text generally restored by J. H. Caldwell." In this production the manager's Richard had the support of Ludlow's Richmond, Mrs. Baker's Queen, and Mrs. Russell's Lady Ann.

Mr. Symons, the engineer of the Gas Department, was given a benefit on March 29; having completed the apparatus and carried the Gas Department "into full effect," he was now about

to depart for the North. Alexander Wilson volunteered his services, appearing as Cornet Ollapod in *The Poor Gentleman*, Caldwell being Frederick Bramble, Jane Placide, Emily Worthington, and Edwin Forrest, Sir Charles Cropland. After the play while Mrs. Noke sang "Auld Robin Gray," Symons exhibited the "novel spectacle" of a flower garden made of gas; and as a concluding feature he took the part of Mr. Belville, "for this night only," in the opera, *Rosina*. It is to be hoped that the people of New Orleans gave Mr. Symons a "bumper." The theatre was the first building in New Orleans to be lighted by gas, and the success of its lamps and those with which Caldwell lighted one side of Camp Street from the theatre to Canal Street was to result in the adoption of gas by the city several years later.<sup>3</sup>

April was ushered in with Joseph Addison's *Cato*, a tragedy which was not repeated. A more successful novelty was Isaac Pocock's melodrama, *Zembuca, or The Net maker and His Wife*. It ran from the 7th until the 15th when Mrs. Baker was given a farewell benefit. Her Angela in *The Castle Spectre* was supported by the Earl Osmond of Edwin Forrest and the Evelina of Mrs. Rowe.

The dancers, Monsieur and Madame Rousset and Mademoiselle Sophie, began an engagement on the 17th in the new ballet, "La Fille Malgardé." The cast included all the members of the dramatic corps, even Jane Placide who had appeared earlier in the evening as the heroine in *The Stranger*. On the 21st the dancers introduced the ballet "Annette and Lubin" and in *Zembuca*, on the 26th, Rousset and Mademoiselle Sophie executed a grand *pas de deux*.

The company benefits commenced with that of James Rowe on May 3. This had been advertised for April 30 but in consequence of the inclement weather had been postponed, "although contrary to the general rule." He offered *The Belle's Stratagem* with Mrs. Rowe as Letitia Hardy, a song by the six year old Miss Mongin, and the ballet, "Little Red Riding Hood," in which Jane Placide (Lubin) and Mrs. Rowe (Little Red Riding Hood) danced a *pas de deux*. On her night, Jane Placide presented Frederick Reynold's comedy, *The Will*, and revived Holcroft's *Tale of Mystery*. The beneficiary's impersonation of Albina Mandeville was enthusiastically commented upon in the *Louisiana Gazette* of May

<sup>3</sup> *Louisiana Gazette*, January 24, 1824.

7: "She promises in her profession on this side of the Atlantic what Mrs. Jordan (who first played the part) was on the other. She . . . wore the breeches with such effect that Mahomet himself, if a spectator, would have been deceived in her sex and given her a chance for a place in the Third Heaven."

Before the next benefit Caldwell brought out Moncrieff's burletta, *Life in London*, an adaptation of Pierce Egan's work which was to figure in the repertoire for many seasons. Ludlow introduced C. E. Walker's melodrama, *Wallace, or The Hero of Scotland*, on his night and between the play and the afterpiece sang "The Hunters of Kentucky." On this occasion Miss Mongin delivered an address written for her "by a gentleman of the city." The little actress had appeared only in roles suitable to one of her age, but in these she had shown a talent which the public felt was worthy of encouragement. At the benefit which Caldwell allowed her on the 15th, she sang "The Hunters of Kentucky," in character, and played Tom Thumb in Kane O'Hara's adaptation of the Fielding burlesque.

Edwin Forrest's benefit presented O'Keeffe's *Wild Oats*, Forrest himself appearing as Ephraim Smooth, Caldwell as Rover, and Jane Placide as Lady Amaranthe. The beneficiary also delivered an address written for the occasion by his fellow actor, Sam Jones, and Caldwell recited Sterne's story of "Le Fevre." On May 22 Mr. and Mrs. Noke offered *Richard III* with Edwin Forrest in the title role and Jane Placide as the Queen, a choice which suggests that the beneficiaries may have regarded young Forrest as a better tragedian than Caldwell, who had played the part earlier in the season. The joint benefit of Mr. and Mrs. Higgins on the 24th brought, among other entertainment, the local première of C. E. Grice's *Battle of New Orleans*. The 28th was announced as "Ticket Night" for the benefit of carpenters, callmen, billposters, captain of the supernumeraries, doorkeepers, and engineer of the gas department. On June 1, Mondelli, the scene painter, took his benefit, presenting *The Solitary of Mount Savage*, a melodrama translated from the French "by a gentleman of this place."<sup>4</sup> Again Miss Mongin offered a song and recitation between the plays and appeared as Helen in the afterpiece, *The Hunter of the Alps*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, June 1, 1824.

A performance for the benefit of the Orphan Boys' Asylum brought the season to a close on June 8, and almost immediately Caldwell and most of the company left for Virginia. The others under Ludlow formed a commonwealth company to tour the South.<sup>5</sup>

## AMERICAN THEATRE, 1825

The records for the second season of the American Theatre are few. Apparently Caldwell advertised in a newspaper which is no longer extant and though it has been possible to determine the personnel of the company from the scattered notices in the *Louisiana Gazette*, few of their presentations are known. Some information regarding the season is to be found in James Rees' *Dramatic Authors of America* and in William Alger's *Life of Edwin Forrest*,<sup>6</sup> yet without corroborative evidence this cannot be accepted as authoritative.

The theatre opened on January 3, 1825, with *The Soldier's Daughter* and *No Song, No Supper*. Caldwell played Frank Heartall in the comedy, and according to Alger, Forrest was Malfort Junior. A communication in the *Louisiana Gazette* the next day, our source of information for the performance, does not mention the cast except to express disappointment that Jackson Gray had not enacted the role of the Old Governor. Doubtless this part had been taken by one of the many new recruits, the most important of which were Alexander Wilson, the tragic star of last season, Mrs. Battersby, formerly of the Park, and Mr. and Mrs. John Greene. Other new members were Mr. and Mrs. Carter, Mr. and Mrs. Parker, John Moore, Lemuel Smith, Kelsey, Murray, and Barnett. Among those who returned were Caldwell, Mr. and Mrs. Russell, Miss Russell, Wm. McCafferty, Garner, Page, Gray, Moses Scott, Edwin and William Forrest, Mesdames Rowe, Higgins, and Bloxton, and Jane Placide.

Moncrieff's *Life in London* seems to have been the most popular presentation of the first month. The *Louisiana Gazette* contains notices of successive performances from January 16 through the 21st, Alexander Wilson playing Tom, Caldwell, Logic, and Russell, Jerry. William Alger records that Edwin Forrest took the part of the Master of Ceremonies. The newspaper notices list Forrest for the role, but it is impossible to say whether William or Edwin actually played it. Alger relates also

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1, 1825.

<sup>6</sup> I, 134-137.

that during this month Edwin played Adrian in *Adrian and Orilla*, Joseph Surface in *The School for Scandal*, and appeared in *The Falls of Clyde* and *The Aethiop*.

The next recorded performance is that of March 2 when William Conway, the English tragedian, began an engagement as Othello, Caldwell enacting Iago, Mrs. Rowe, Desdemona, and Mrs. Battersby, Emilia. The *Louisiana Gazette* of the 3rd notes that these parts were supported with much animation. "Since we have been in Orleans," concluded this writer, "we have not seen the piece so well sustained." During his stay of eight nights, the visiting tragedian appeared as Lord Townly in *The Provoked Husband*, Virginius (twice), Castali in the local première of Otway's *Orphan*, and for his benefit on the 14th as Heymey in *The Apostate*. Alger says that Edwin Forrest enacted Malcolm in the star's production of *Macbeth*, but of this performance we have no record.

Lafayette arrived in the city on April 9 and in honor of his visit to the theatre on the 11th there was presented, "for the second time in New Orleans," Samuel Woodworth's historical play, *Lafayette, or The Castle of Olmutz*. Caldwell recited an address written for the occasion and the farce *The Three and the Deuce* concluded the entertainment.

The benefits began sometime in April. At Wilson's benefit on the 18th, there was offered "for the first time the new American Drama written by an American Gentleman called Percy, or *The Hero of the North*." On the 23rd Russell presented *A Cure for the Heartache* and *The Spoiled Child* with Mary Ann Russell as Little Pickle. This young actress had made her stage début in New York the previous July. In Moncrieff's *Cataract of the Ganges* on the 30th she personated a Bayadère dancer. This novelty was brought out in great splendor with magnificent costumes and "a real stream of falling water; the first thing of this kind ever produced in New Orleans." According to Alger, Edwin Forrest's benefit took place early in May, when, after having been underlined for Lear, he appeared in *The Mountaineers* as Octavian.

The last notice to be found in the *Louisiana Gazette* is one on May 16, advertising for that evening Edward Fitzball's *Peveril of the Peak*. James Rees says that the season ended on May 28,<sup>7</sup> and Alger gives the additional information that on this occasion Edwin Forrest played Carwin in John Howard Payne's new drama, *Thérèse*.

<sup>7</sup> Rees, *op. cit.*, 64.

## AMERICAN THEATRE, 1826

The American Theatre opened on January 24, 1826, several weeks later than Caldwell had originally planned. He had taken the company to Nashville for the fall season intending to return to New Orleans early in January; however, when the time came for the departure, the Cumberland River had become unnavigable and he was forced to take a longer route.<sup>8</sup> The company did not arrive in New Orleans until the 20th, and then the "impossibility of completing the new gas apparatus" caused another postponement of the opening.

The plays of the first night, *The Honey Moon* and *The Three and the Deuce*, reintroduced many of last season's company: Caldwell, Kelsey, Russell, Gray, Moses Scott, Moore, Higgins, Murray, Mesdames Russell, Rowe, Higgins, and Jane Placide. The recruits who made their bows on this evening were W. C. Drummond, "from the New York and Charleston Theatres," William Duffy, "from the Canada Theatres," De Grove, Lucas, Lowry, and Thomas Placide. This last actor, a brother of the famous Henry Placide and of Eliza and Jane, left soon after the beginning of the season. Before his departure he appeared as Campillo in *The Honey Moon*, Furst in *William Tell*, the second carrier in *Henry IV*, and a sailor in *Don Juan*. Ludlow records that Placide, having failed to secure an engagement with Caldwell, came to Mobile early in 1826 and was given a place in his company.<sup>9</sup>

Later bills of this season list Alexander Wilson, William Forrest, Parker, McCafferty, Mesdames Bloxton and Parker, and Miss Russell. Among the missing were Mr. and Mrs. Green, Edwin Forrest, Garner, Page, and Mrs. Battersby. Forrest had left the company at the conclusion of the previous season; Ludlow and Alger say that he had quarreled with Manager Caldwell.

The second night brought a novelty, Sheridan Knowles' *William Tell* with Caldwell in the name part, Mrs. Russell as Emma and Miss Russell as Albert. William Drummond appeared as Michael and as Caleb Quotem in the afterpiece, *The Review*. This actor who had been engaged to fill Edwin Forrest's place soon became a favorite. He was the Prince of Wales to Caldwell's Hotspur and Gray's Falstaff in *Henry IV*, on the 26th, following

<sup>8</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, January 10, 1826.

<sup>9</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 269.

it on the 27th with Bronzely in *Wives as They Were and Maids as They Are*, Corinthian Tom in *Tom and Jerry*, and Mr. Dearlove in Moncrieff's farce *The Secret*. A second important novelty was Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, presented on the 30th. Apparently Gray's portrayal of Falstaff had met with success.

Caldwell turned to melodrama the second week, bringing out *Zemluca*, *The Falls of Clyde*, and *Rob Roy*. A new recruit, Joseph Still, made his debut in the Scott adaptation as Osbaldistone. In *Matrimony*, the afterpiece of the evening, he was Delaval, Mrs. Russell playing opposite him as Clara. On February 6 they were paired as Belville and Rosina in the opera *Rosina*, and in *Guy Mannering* they were Henry and Lucy Bertram. Still was the principal singer this season and appeared regularly in the so-called operas and musical afterpieces. The *Louisiana Advertiser* of February 6 described him as possessing a sweet voice, good taste, and as being a better actor than was generally seen in the department of opera.

Alexander Wilson made his first appearance on the 13th as Octavian in *The Mountaineers*, the afterpiece being *The Forest of Rosenwald* with Drummond as Raymond and Mrs. Rowe as Agnes. In *The Aethiop* the next night Caldwell and Jane Placide took the leads. *Venice Preserved* on the 15th presented Caldwell as Jaffier to Wilson's Pierre and Jane Placide's Belvidera. A communication appearing in the *Louisiana Advertiser* of February 19 is a welcome one, for in previous seasons though criticism had often been directed at Caldwell's tragic impersonations, no definite faults were pointed out. Now we learn that Caldwell's impatience got the better of him in some scenes of *Venice Preserved*. "In fact," continued the writer, "the only things that Mr. Caldwell wants is a little more calmness and deliberation to render him a good tragedian."

The most popular comedy of the season was Bickerstaff's *Hypocrite*, introduced on February 17. In the *Louisiana Advertiser* of the 21st this was described as the most successful comedy since the opening of the theatre in 1824. A new historical play, H. J. Finn's *Montgomery, or The Falls of Montmorency*, was given on the 22nd and in the interval before the farce a transparency was exhibited. The performance of *Thérèse* on the 27th should not be overlooked, for the title role long remained one of Jane Placide's favorites.

Dr. Brown's celebrated tragedy, *Barbarossa*, was revived on March 6 that a "young gentleman of this city" might make his stage début as Selim. A month later the young gentleman enacted George Barnwell. It is likely that this amateur was the Mr. Watson who assisted at Wilson's benefit on May 5 and who, "although not upon the boards of the Camp Street Theatre," was given a benefit on the 24th. Stated a card in the *Louisiana Advertiser* on the latter occasion: "All his hopes (Watson's) of public favor arise from the generous sympathy that the considerate and enlightened lovers of the drama ever evince in behalf of a young performer commencing his theatrical career."

On March 8, Mrs. Johns, "from the Canada Theatre," made her first appearance as Angela in *The Castle Spectre* and as Little Pickle. The newcomer seems to have been engaged as "second comedy"; later she appeared as Lady Contest in *The Wedding*, Lady Elizabeth Freelove in *The Day after the Wedding*, Annelli in *William Tell*, Roxalana in *The Sultan*, and the first niece in *The Critic*.

The week of March 13 brought several novelties: Thomas Greenwood's skit, *Death of Life in London, or Tom and Jerry's Funeral*; Thomas Parry's farce, *Helpless Animals*; and the opera *Der Freischutz*, "with all the original music composed by the Chevalier Carl Maria von Weber." Earlier in the season an improvement in the musical department of the theatre had been noted, and now, on the day of the opera, a puff in the *Louisiana Advertiser* stated that never before had the orchestra been so well supplied or so replete with musical talent. In view of this it is interesting to read the comment of an English traveller who visited the theatre at this time.

The late Carl von Weber would not have been delighted at witnessing the performance of his *Der Freischutz*, here metamorphosed into *The Wild Horseman of Bohemia*. Six violins which played anything but music and some voices far from being human performed the opera which was applauded; the Kentuckians expressed their satisfaction in a hurrah, which made the very walls tremble.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile Mathis, a Parisian Posture Master from the London Olympic Theatre, had begun a six-night engagement. He entertained with "grand lion leaps," posturing, bending, pitching, tumbling, flip flops, herculean feats, and tightrope

<sup>10</sup> Karl Post, *The Americans as They Are*, 184.

dancing. At his benefit, April 19, the bill concluded with a comic dance on stilts performed by the beneficiary and "a person belonging to the theatre." Mathis was the only visiting performer this season as Thomas Cooper and Robert Maywood, the English tragedian, failed to keep their engagements.<sup>11</sup>

Repetitions of *Der Freischutz*, *Sweethearts and Wives*, *La Perouse*, and *Don Juan* graced the bills of early April. On the 6th the afterpiece was a novelty, Poole's *Frederick the Great*, or *The Two Pages*. The next evening brought *The Talisman* by a "gentleman of this city"; this was repeated on the 10th, attracting, it was said, "a numerous and brilliant audience." A less important novelty was Pocock's *Robinson Crusoe*, given on the 8th.

Caldwell had a benefit on the 14th when he presented acts from five Shakespearian plays, Jane Placide supporting him in each. The popular musical farce, *The Children in the Wood*, concluded the bill. Managerial duties seem to have pressed heavily upon Caldwell this season causing him to appear less frequently than before. In a revival of *The Falls of Clyde* on April 17, Duffy replaced him as Malcolm. Earlier in the month the same actor had played Icillius (*Virginus*), another of Caldwell's roles. The opening piece on the 17th was *Charles II* by John Howard Payne and Washington Irving, a comedy destined to figure in the repertoire for many seasons.

The most splendid of this season's novelties was the spectacular *Cherry and Fair Star*, or *The Child of Cyprus*, brought out on April 24 at a cost of \$3,000. The scenery and machinery, on which Mondelli, McCafferty, and Varden were said to have spent three months, included a fairy grotto and views of the sea and the port of Cyprus. For this last the stage was entirely covered with water and down it sailed a splendid Grecian galley. The spectacle was enthusiastically received; it had a run of six nights and was brought back later for three more performances.

Comedies were a feature of the last month of this season. On May 2 Samuel Jones made his first appearance in two years as Governor Heartall (*The Soldier's Daughter*). Russell initiated the benefits the next night with Thomas Morton's *A Cure for the Heartache*, "a gentleman" volunteering as Old Rapid, and Caldwell and Jane Placide assisting as Young Rapid and Miss Vortex.

<sup>11</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, January 21, 1826.

In *The Poor Soldier*, which served as the afterpiece on this evening, Miss Russell appeared as Darby. Jane Placide's benefit on the 10th offered *The Will* and *The Magpie and the Maid*, and between the pieces she sang, by particular request, "Home Sweet Home." "It is not too much to say," wrote a critic in the *Louisiana Advertiser*, "that she ranks with the first of the female performers in our country. She has appeared before us in every possible character and has always acquitted herself with applause." On Mrs. Russell's night her youthful daughter essayed Dr. Pangloss in *The Heir at Law*, and Ralph in the farce, *The Lock and Key*, was performed by the amateur who had enacted Old Rapid at Russell's benefit. In the afterpiece, *The Warlock of the Glen*, on May 13, A. J. Marks made his first New Orleans appearance as Andrew. Three nights later he personated Bailey Nicoll Jarvie (*Rob Roy*), one of Russell's old roles.

Only two of the other benefits need be mentioned. Mrs. Rowe's introduced Samuel Beazley's long popular opera, *Is He Jealous?*, and on her night Miss Russell appeared as Crack in *The Turnpike Gate*. On May 29 the season was brought to a close with *The Vampire*, erroneously announced as "the first time in New Orleans," and *Cherry and Fair Star*.

Caldwell had furnished good dramatic entertainment this season and with the exception of a few weeks, the theatre had been open every night but Sunday. Yet the *Louisiana Advertiser* of the 29th reported that he had lost \$6,000 through "the effect of the present adverse times and the various accidents to which theatrical seasons are subject."

By 1826 Caldwell had given up his interests in the Virginia theatres and at the conclusion of this season he took the company to Huntsville, Alabama, to perform in a small theatre, which had recently been built there.<sup>12</sup> After five weeks the troupe proceeded to Nashville where they played in the old Cherry Street Theatre until they could occupy the new house which was being built for Caldwell.<sup>13</sup>

AMERICAN THEATRE, 1827

Caldwell promised to return to New Orleans early in 1827 and with this in mind he brought the Nashville season to a close on December 23, 1826.<sup>14</sup> Immediate departure was impossible,

<sup>12</sup> Rees, *op. cit.*, 64.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

however, as the Cumberland River was again unnavigable. To the friends who were impatiently awaiting his arrival, he wrote on January 1:

The ice is running down the river in acre-flakes—such a winter has never been known. I have made twenty attempts to get down, but in every one have been defeated—tomorrow morning we get into a keel to join the steamboat General Coffee and shall Heaven willing be in New Orleans by the 15th.<sup>15</sup>

Those who made the trip with Caldwell were Mr. and Mrs. Russell, Mr. and Mrs. Higgins, Gray, Kelsey, Duffy, Still, McCafferty, Moore, Lowry, Murray, Sam Jones, Mesdames Rowe, Bloxton, and Johns, and the new recruits Emberton, Mulhollon, Lear, Sandford, and Palmer. The company had lost Alexander Wilson, William Forrest, and W. C. Drummond but otherwise was little changed from that of last year. Later in the season Mr. and Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Tatnall, Miss Carpenter, and Hartwig joined the forces.

The theatre opened on February 2, 1827, with Charles Dibdin's new comedy, *Paul Pry*, followed by *Of Age To-morrow* and *The Spoiled Child*. The first piece was an immediate success; Russell's personation of Paul Pry and later that of George Holland were to hold the stage for many years. On the second night *The Foundling of the Forest* introduced Lear, "from the Canada Theatre," as Bertram to the DeValmont of Caldwell, the Unknown Female of Jane Placide, and the Geraldine of Mrs. Rowe. The musical afterpiece, *Lock and Key*, featured Still as Captain Cheerly.

The first star to arrive was Lydia Kelly, a comédienne from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and, for the past two seasons, the reigning favorite in New York. Se began her engagement on the 7th as Letitia Hardy in *The Belle's Stratagem*, followed it on the 9th with Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing* and Rosina in *Rosina*, and on her third appearance offered Donna Violante in *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret* and Caroline in *The Prize*. Thereafter, she was seen as the heroine in *The School for Scandal*, *Turn Out, As You Like It*, *The Honey Moon* (Juliana), *Of Age To-morrow*, *Wives as They Were*, *The Day after the Wedding*, and *The Jealous Wife*. Her benefit bill on March 12 presented her in *The Will and No Song, No Supper*.

<sup>15</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, February 1, 1827.

Miss Kelly performed only four times a week; on the other nights the manager revived such favorites as *The Aethiop*, *The Exile of Siberia*, *The Gamester*, and *Thérèse*. Caldwell appeared almost every night during this first month, playing the comedy leads opposite Miss Kelly and performing with Jane Placide in the melodramas.

On March 5 Miss Kelly reappeared as Bertha in *Des Freischutz* and as Mrs. Simpson in *Simpson and Co*. She also offered *The Soldier's Daughter* (Widow Cheerly), *No Song, No Supper*, and *Know Your Own Mind*. With the performance of March 10 the records of this second engagement end; the next available reference is to a bill of March 17, by which date Miss Kelly had departed.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Tatnall "from the northern theatres" had opened on March 8 in *Venice Preserved*, playing Belvidera to the Jaffier of Caldwell and the Pierre of Duffy. She was to have been introduced in *Pizarro* on February 27, but a sudden indisposition had prevented this. It is possible that on this occasion Jane Placide took her place as Elvira and that Hartwig "from the Boston theatre" made his début as Alonzo, the role for which he had been announced. In *Rob Roy* on March 3 Mrs. Tatnall made her third appearance as Helen McGregor and the next week she was Zorilda in *Timour the Tartar*. This was repeated with *The Magpie and the Maid* on the 24th; and for her benefit two nights later, she played Adelgitha and Umbra in *La Perouse*.

Since Mrs. Tatnall was soon to become a regular member of the company, a word as to her history may not be amiss here. She had made her stage début at the Olympic Circus in Philadelphia, where her second husband (Tatnall) was manager of the equestrian corps, and since then had appeared at the Park and Lafayette in New York. She played in tragedy, comedy, and equestrian drama and in all was eminently successful.

The last star of the season was the tragedian, Thomas Cooper, who began his engagement on the 28th with *Macbeth*. He went through a familiar round: *Hamlet*, *Virginius* (twice), *Damon and Pythias* (twice), *Richard III*, *Bertram*, *The Gamester*, *Othello*, and *Catharine and Petruchio*. Since the last visit the only additions to his repertoire were *Pizarro* and *William Tell*, the latter being given for his benefit on April 20.

Several new afterpieces brought novelty into the bills during Cooper's long engagement. On the 5th there was *The Irish Widow* of David Garrick with Mrs. Tatnall in the leading role. The evening before she had given her first performance as a regular member of the company, appearing as Calanthe in *Damon and Pythias*. On the 16th came George Macfarren's *Malvina, or The Hall of Fingal*, a "ballad opera," based on an older play, *Oscar and Malvina*. Richard Peake's new farce, *The Duel, or My Two Nephews*, was given several nights later.

After Cooper's departure Caldwell engaged the stud of horses belonging to the North American Circus Company and on April 23 he presented *Timour the Tartar* "in a style of splendor never before witnessed in New Orleans." Messrs. Gates and Green as well as others of the equestrian troupe supported the *Timour* of Caldwell and the *Zorilda* of Mrs. Tatnall. The theatre was closed on the 26th "in consequence of the necessity of a night rehearsal for *Blue Beard*," in which Jane Placide enacted Fatima, and Kelsey, Abomilique. When the *Cataract of the Ganges* was revived on the 30th, these two again shared the leads; on its repetition the next night, it preceded Mrs. Inchbald's farce, *The Mogul Tale, or A Cocker's Flight in an Air Balloon*, "first time in New Orleans." It should be noted that on May 3 Mrs. Tatnall played Morgiana in *The Forty Thieves*, a role usually taken by Jane Placide, and that two days later she replaced Miss Placide as Zamine in *The Cataract of the Ganges*. For her benefit on May 8 she gave *Lodoiska*, the managers of the circus having very politely offered their horses. On this evening Miss Carpenter danced a *pas seul*, and *The Spoiled Child*, with the beneficiary as Little Pickle, concluded the bill.

Sakoski, an acrobat, made his first appearance on May 12 as Orson to the *Valentine* of Caldwell. The melodrama was repeated on the 25th and on the next evening when he volunteered for Still's benefit. Eugene Robertson, the aeronaut, came forward on May 16 to present his optical delusions or phantasmagoria. During this engagement of five nights he also exhibited an Automaton Trumpeter and Chinese Fire.

The benefits this season offered few new plays. On the 23rd Russell presented *Town and Country*, a gentleman volunteer appearing as Jacky Hawbuck, and *The Turnpike Gate* with Miss Russell as Crack. Mrs. Russell chose *The Soldier's Daughter*

that she might enact Widow Cheerly, and Mrs. Higgins, on her night, appeared as Mrs. Malaprop. The bill on the latter occasion concluded with the ballet, "Little Red Riding Hood," Miss Carpenter and Mrs. Tatnall succeeding to the roles originally taken by Jane Placide and Mrs. Rowe.

On June 4 Jane Placide made her first appearance in over a month. According to a communication in the *Argus* she had lately been the victim of an unfortunate accident and now returned to the boards to take a farewell benefit. "Her retirement," said the writer, "will occasion a chasm in the female department of the theatrical corps which the manager will find difficult to fill."

On the 6th Mrs. Rowe revived Mrs. Inchbald's *Everyone Has His Fault* and *The Agreeable Surprise*, "not acted here in five years." Between the pieces a native of Scotland played national airs on a real Scotch harp. Caldwell's benefit on June 8, the last night of the season, brought the novelties, *Not at Home*, a new farce "by a gentleman of New Orleans," and Monk Lewis' *The Wood Daemon*, the latter with new scenery and decoration.

This year Caldwell had decided to extend his interests to St. Louis, a thriving little town where money was said to be plentiful. Early in May he sent carpenters and artists ahead to fix the theatre which he had leased<sup>16</sup> and three weeks after the closing of the American Theatre he and the company were in St. Louis.

AMERICAN THEATRE, 1827-1828

The theatre in St. Louis was a renovated salt house, none too comfortable in the hot summer weather, and though the New Orleans company offered "delectable amusement," the performances were not well attended. After two months the troupe proceeded to Nashville; but remembering the delays and difficulties of the previous winter journeys from that city to New Orleans, Caldwell arranged for an early departure. By December 18, he and the company were in New Orleans.

During the summer the American Theatre had undergone great alterations and now presented a "much lighter and better *tout ensemble* than it has ever yet done." Several new performers had been added to the company, among them Mr. and Mrs. Sol Smith, Mr. and Mrs. H. Crampton, Mr. William Anderson, a member of Caldwell's first New Orleans company, Mr. and Mrs.

<sup>16</sup> *Argus*, May 7, 1827.

Lemuel Smith, and a Mr. Jackson. These with Caldwell, Mr. and Mrs. Russell, Miss Russell, Mrs. Rowe, Mrs. Hartwig (formerly Mrs. Tatnall), Mrs. Johns, Mrs. Higgins, Jackson Gray, Sam Jones, John Still, Palmer, McCafferty, and Lear, formed a competent, though far from excellent, company. Mrs. Hartwig succeeded Jane Placide as the company's leading lady and though she never won the acclaim that had been Jane's, she managed to fill the "chasm" which had been occasioned by the loss of the favorite.

The season opened on December 21 with two novelties, Arnold's comedy, *Man and Wife*, and the younger Colman's farce, *X Y Z*. After the play "Little Wot Ye Wha's Comin" and "Larry O'Gaff" were sung by Crampton, who was heard in Scotch and Irish songs from this day till the end of the season. The performances of the next night served to introduce Mr. and Mrs. S. Smith, "from the Western Theatres." She appeared as Diana Vernon in *Rob Roy*, and he as Billy Lackaday in the afterpiece, *Sweethearts and Wives*. Solomon S. Smith was twenty-seven at this time and had served an apprenticeship in the western theatres but as yet had not attained prominence as a low comedian. Russell and Crampton were the mainstays of this season's comic force, and Smith seems to have been engaged for utility work.

Caldwell brought out his novelties early this season. On December 24 came H. J. Finn's *Montgomery, or The Falls of Montmorency* with Caldwell in the title role. This was followed by an address and patriotic songs, all "in honor of the glorious 23rd of December, 1814," an anniversary which had been celebrated in the French theatre on the previous day. Christmas brought *Bertram* with Anderson in the name part and Mrs. Hastings as Imogene. This actor had been engaged for the "heavy business," and his name figures prominently in the melodramatic revivals of the season. On the 27th, he was Abaellino to the *Rosamonda* of Mrs. Rowe. The farce on this occasion was Richard Butler's *The Irish Tutor, or New Lights*, with Crampton taking the part of Jerry O'Rourke. The next night, in commemoration of another historical event of 1814, Noah's *Marion* and patriotic songs were offered. The afterpiece was one new to the city, Joseph Lunn's farce, *Family Jars*, with McCafferty as Diggory, Mrs. S. Smith as Lyddy, and Sol as Delph, a part which soon became a favorite with the public.

The spectacular *Cherry and Fair Star* was revived on the 29th. "That interesting child," Miss Russell, was Papillo; Mrs. Hartwig was Cherry, and Mrs. Rowe, Fair Star. A novelty for the New Orleans audience was E. P. Knight's musical farce, *A Chip of the Old Block*, in which Russell was Chip, the drunken cooper, Mrs. Russell was Rose, and Mrs. Rowe, Emma. On January 4, George Soane's melodrama, *The Innkeeper's Daughter*, was offered "for the first time in this theatre," Caldwell personating Richard and Mrs. Hartwig, Mary. Three or four days previous John Howard Payne's dramatic sketch, *Love in Humble Life*, had been introduced. The record of the first performance is missing, but the announcement of a repetition on January 7 lists Crampton as Ronstaus and Mrs. Russell as Christine. Sol Smith records in *Theatrical Management* that his was the role of Carlitz. The entertainment on January 8 commenced with M. M. Noah's play, *She Would Be a Soldier, or The Plains of Chippewa*, always a favorite on such days, and concluded with the anonymous *Nature and Philosophy* in which Mrs. Hartwig enacted Colin, the youth who had never seen a woman. To give *éclat* to these performances a "new and superb transparency" of General Jackson was exhibited after the play, and there were the inevitable address and patriotic songs. Two days later the transparency was still on exhibit and we read also of a perfectly equipped Frigate of War, which was drawn around the stage while Mr. Still sang "The Minute Gun at Sea."

First appearances were the feature of January 11, 1828, when H. N. Cambridge, "from the Boston Theatre," made his bow as Octavian in *The Mountaineers*, and the part of Jeremy Diddler in the afterpiece, *Raising the Wind*, was taken by Mr. Brady, "his first appearance on any stage." Cambridge had made his "fourth appearance on any stage" in New York the previous year—without acclaim. It is to be hoped that in New Orleans Mrs. Hartwig's Floranthe inspired him to better acting. On the 12th of January the city had its first glimpse of Charles Kemble's twenty-year-old drama, *The Wanderer*, Caldwell enacting Sigismond and Mrs. Hartwig, the Countess Valdestein. For the present this was the manager's last important role, as Junius Brutus Booth had arrived to take over the leads.

The tragedian opened on the 14th in his favorite character of Richard III and for his second performance appeared as Hamlet. *Othello*, with Caldwell as Iago, Mrs. Rowe as Desde-

mona, and Mrs. Hartwig as Emilia was the third offering; and *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, the fourth. Orestes in *The Distressed Mother*, Lear, to the Cordelia of Mrs. Rowe, and Reuben Glenroy in *Town and Country* were enacted successively; and for the last night of his engagement, January 28, he selected *Sylla*, an adaptation from the French made expressly for him "by a gentleman of New York." At his benefit on the 30th he appeared as Shylock to the Portia of Mrs. Hartwig and as Jerry Sneak in Samuel Foote's *The Mayor of Garratt*. The following night he volunteered his services for the benefit of the Asylum for Destitute Orphan Boys, performing Sir Edward Mortimer in *The Iron Chest*, Caldwell assisting as Wilford and Mrs. Rowe as Helen. According to a notice which had appeared several times during Booth's first week, his other engagements in the north would prevent any re-engagement. Yet on February 2 Caldwell announced a re-engagement, and Booth stayed to repeat his favorite Richard and to play opposite Mrs. Hartwig in *Bertram*, *Brutus*, and *The Apostate*. As he was in New Orleans on February 13, he "very generously offered his services" for Still's benefit, re-appearing as Lear and as Sir Edward Mortimer, this time to the Wilford of the beneficiary. It should be noted that on this night the ever-versatile Mrs. Hartwig, fresh from her triumphs as Imogene, Tullia and Florinda, danced à pas seul and appeared as Mrs. Bromley in the afterpiece, *Simpson and Co.*

After Booth's departure Caldwell brought out more novelties. On the 15th was performed M. R. Lacy's *Love and Reason*, announced as "a new comedy never acted in America," though it had been given five months before at the Bowery Theatre in New York.<sup>17</sup> It was repeated as an afterpiece on the following night when the main attraction was a revival of *The Exile of Siberia*, featuring Caldwell and Mrs. Hartwig and "a beautiful representation of a SNOW STORM." The same scenery was used in *The Snow Storm, or Lorrina of Tobolsko*, which was given "for the first time in this theatre" on February 22 and repeated on the 25th.

On February 18 was offered William Dimond's *Bride of Abydos*, a spectacle which had cost the manager \$1,000. For four successive nights it was witnessed by crowded houses though on two of these, February 19 and 21, Booth was performing in

<sup>17</sup> George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, III, 329.

Racine's *Andromache* at the Orleans Theatre. While Mondelli prepared new and appropriate scenery for the next melodramatic romance, Richard Russell took a farewell benefit at which he appeared as Tyke in *The School of Reform*. There were repetitions of *Love and Reason*, *The Exile of Siberia*, and *The Bride of Abydos* and on February 28, *Tom and Jerry* was announced "for the only night this season." On the 3rd of March came the novelty which had been in preparation, *The Woodman's Hut*, by Samuel Arnold. According to the extant records, this was the most popular of the season's pieces, attaining at least six performances. Its success may have accounted for the revival of the *Falls of Clyde* and *The Forty Thieves* on March 6 and *The Forest of Rosenwald* on the 8th.

McCafferty's benefit (March 14) introduced William Barrymore's Grand Asiatic melodrama, *El Hyder*. Though this was generally staged as an equestrian piece, no mention is made of the horses. Is it possible that Mrs. Hartwig played Harry Clinton without "their powerful aid"? In the afterpiece, *The Turnpike Gate*, McCafferty essayed Crack with the song of "My Deary." On her benefit night (March 17) Mrs. Hartwig abandoned the role of Harry Clinton to enact Mrs. Oakley in *The Jealous Wife*, and Umba, "with an Indian dance," in the afterpiece, *La Perouse*. The historical pantomime was not new, but Mrs. Hartwig's Umba, assisted by the Ranko of "a gentleman of this city," and the Chimpanzee of Mr. Hunt, "of the circus," must have made this an interesting performance. After weeks of melodrama, Crampton's choice of *The West Indian* for his night (March 24) should have come as a relief to the audience—and to the actors. An added attraction was the appearance of the well-known citizen, Mr. Kenny Laverty, Esq., as Major O'Flaherty. After the play Sol Smith sang "The Beautiful Boy" and Mr. Crampton rendered his composition, "Blue Bonnets over The Border" and joined in a duet with Mrs. Crampton. Even Miss Charlotte Crampton, "a child only seven years old," contributed her musical bit. The bill ended with *The Highland Reel*, Crampton in the role of Shelly.

The records of the next five performances are missing, but we know that one of these was Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, a play which recently had proved successful in New York. For several weeks the newspapers had carried notices that it was "in preparation for Mr. Caldwell's benefit"; on the 31st it was

announced "for the second time in New Orleans." According to this managerial notice in the *Louisiana Advertiser*, "a fashionable and overflowing audience" had bestowed "unbounded applause" on the initial presentation and there had been a "general request" for a repetition. With this performance of March 31 the theatre closed until Easter Monday.

Mrs. Rowe took her benefit when the theatre re-opened on April 7. After she had enacted Letitia Hardy, with the song of "The Mermaid," she sustained eight characters in George Macfarren's new farce, *Winning a Husband*. She was

Miss Jenny Transit, a young lady who amplifies the mutability of human affairs; Margaret Macmuckleanny, a learned lassie from the highlands, in which character she will sing a new song, called "Blue Bonnets o'er the Border"; Miss Cornelia Clementina Clappergo, a voluminous and volatile literary spinster; Lady Dorothea Dashby, a lady of the town, with the celebrated song of "Bid Me Discourse"; Mrs. Deborah Griskin, a Pork Butcher's Widow, with more airs than graces; Madmoiselle Antoinette Marasquien, a French Figurante with a *Pas Seul*; Bridget Buckshorn, a rustic beauty with a red cloak; and Ensign Thaddeus O'Transit, of the Kilkenny Flamers.

During the calm before the next benefit, *The Honey Moon* and *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* were revived that Caldwell might appear in his favorite roles of the Duke of Aranza and Leon. Then, on April 11, Miss Russell bade farewell in one of the season's most interesting benefits. Among the entertainments offered by the young actress were her personation of Little Pickle, a musical olio in which she gave "A Hit at the Law," "as sung by Mr. Sloman in the northern theatres," and *Tom Thumb*, with Master Russell appearing in the title role, "for the first time." But unquestionably the event of the evening was the performance of *Tom and Jerry*, in which the part of Bob Logic was played "by the master of an American vessel," O'Boozle, "by the master of a British vessel," Corinthian Tom, "by the gentleman who sung at Mrs. Russell's benefit," and Dusty Bob, "by a Gentleman."

Mondelli's night (April 14) brought forth *The Blind Boy*, an old melodrama "with new scenery," and the favorite comedy, *The Soldier's Daughter*, Mrs. Russell as the Widow Cheerly. Between the pieces a Mr. Jeandot played a concert on the flute. On April 16, a benefit was tendered Victor Pepin, "formerly

manager of the Circus." As Mr. Pepin approached his fellow citizens "with the cap of necessity," it is to be hoped that a large and liberal audience was attracted by a bill which included three popular pieces, *Winning a Husband*, *Of Age Tomorrow* and *The Wandering Boys*.

For his benefit on the 17th Sol Smith offered *The Honey Moon* and *The Poor Soldier*, appearing as Jacques to his wife's Juliana in the first and as Darby to her Patrick in the afterpiece. Smith states in his memoirs that with the exception of the character of Delph (*Family Jars*) and Carlitz (*Love in Humble Life*) he did little this season except "walk in processions, sing in choruses, and shout in armies, besides fighting in all general battles."<sup>18</sup> He does not mention the many occasions on which he sang his comic songs; nor does he tell of his wife's activities. For further information concerning the young couple, we must turn to a communication in the *Argus* of April 17.

As a general visitor of the theatre . . . I take the liberty of stating that there are not any of the whole Corps Dramatic, who possess stronger claims upon the generosity of the public than do Mr. Smith and his amiable wife. Mrs. Smith is surely the most admirable songstress that has ever graced our boards—and it cannot be denied that she has contributed no small share of the refined amusement which that portion of the audience have this season enjoyed. Mr. Smith in low comedy, has never failed to chase away the tragical gloom, often sending us away from the house with our sides aching with laughter at the truly comic performance of the "Beautiful Boy." . . .

Two more benefits and this season was to be brought to a close. To add novelty to a bill which included *Speed the Plough* and *The Critic*, Mrs. Higgins engaged the celebrated Mexican Dwarf, thirty-two inches high, and "upwards of fifty years old." He danced a Spanish Fandango, went through the manual exercises, and appeared in the afterpiece as Lord Burley. Caldwell, for his benefit on April 19, announced the "last new and highly attractive piece of *The Hundred Pound Note*." In this farce of Richard Peake's, Russell played Billy Black, the part which Hilson and Barnes had taken in New York the previous year, and Mrs. Rowe was Miss Arlington, "with the original Bavarian Girl's Broom Song." After recitations of "Alexander's Feast" (Palmer), "Bucks Have At Ye All" (Caldwell), and the hum-

<sup>18</sup> Sol Smith, *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years*, 49.

orous story of "The Kilkenny Cats" (Mr. Jarvis) came the *pièce de résistance*, *Tom and Jerry*, with Corinthian Tom, Bob Logic, and Dusty Bob enacted by those gentlemen who had appeared at Miss Russell's benefit. This time, however, Corinthian Tom was to sing "The Mill" and Dusty Bob was to dance a *Pas de Deux* with African Sal, two features not mentioned in the notice of the earlier performance. With this novelty the theatre closed, and the company prepared to leave for the summer campaign in Natchez and St. Louis.

AMERICAN THEATRE, 1828-1829

The American Theatre opened for one of its most successful seasons on Wednesday, December 17, 1828. During the summer extensive alterations had been made in the interior of the building, and it was reported that the house could now seat two thousand people. The pit had been converted into forty-two boxes, which with the thirty boxes of the first tier accommodated nearly six hundred. From an account of these improvements given in the *Louisiana Advertiser* of December 19, we get the first and only adequate description of the interior of the theatre on Camp Street.

The Pit (or parquet) Boxes are superbly fitted up, carpeted throughout and contain five mahogany chairs with stuffed seats and crimson coverings. . . . Each stage box is ornamented with a looking glass seven feet by three that affords a panoramic view, as it were, of the audience. These mirrors are tastefully decorated with blue damask and surmounted each by a large eagle in *or*, displaying the national flag in satin. . . .

On entering the Boxes the first thing the eye rests upon is the majestic Proscenium of this theatre. It is an elliptic arch of thirty-eight feet span, supported by two Doric pilasters in imitation of Scarcolina marble, reeded in gold, the bases and capitals also in gold, resting upon attic pedestals of *verd de mer* marble. . . . The dome or ceiling is painted in arabesque and has the appearance of a fan when open. The color is imitation of blue silk, surrounded by another resembling that of the morning's dawn. The centre is a canopy painted in light clouds, studded with silver stars. Here is suspended a beautiful cut glass chandelier nine feet in diameter.

The decorations on the front of the boxes vary in every tier. The lower circle is set off with wreaths of roses and flowers, supported by golden zephyrs upon a prismatic ground with gold mouldings. The fronts of the second and

third tiers are in arabesque and gilt. Around the boxes are candelabras (*dores*) with three branches and large ground glass shades to soften the light. Every part of the house is brilliantly illuminated with gas.

The amphitheatre is divided from the lobby by a brick wall with doors leading to each box; and the parallel sides are thrown into large arches more convenient and salubrious in this climate, as a free circulation of air can be always commanded by opening several large windows in the main halls.

The partition of the Parquet boxes—the wall that encircles them, and supports the cast iron columns of the different tiers of boxes . . . are all, including the arches, of a delicate rose color, and thus seem well calculated to set off the fair complexions of the Ladies who may honour the really beautiful Theatre with their presence.

These improvements in the audience side of the house, however they may combine chasteness with splendor, are likely to be eclipsed in the stage department. The scenery is entirely new—each one covers nearly 1000 square feet of canvas, having 36 feet in width by 27 in height.

With the exception of Caldwell (Frank Heartall), Gray (Governor Heartall), Russell (Timothy Quaint) and Anderson (Mr. Malfort), the cast of the opening play, *The Soldier's Daughter*, was new: Henry G. Pearson, A. W. Fenno, Henderson, H. N. Barry, Kenny, Mrs. Lacombe, and Mrs. Edstram. The part of Widow Cheerly was taken by Mrs. Crooke, formerly Mrs. Entwistle, who now returned to New Orleans after an absence of six years. Perhaps there is little need to record that her "fine recitation" gave great satisfaction to the "overflowing and brilliant audience" that witnessed this first performance. Mr. Crooke, "from the Dublin and Liverpool theatres," made his bow on the second night as Rolando in *The Honey Moon*; and in the operatic farce, *No Song, No Supper* a Mr. Carr was introduced as Frederick (with songs). According to his fellow actor, Sol Smith, Carr was a "kind of 'rough-shod' vocalist, a Cockney Jew, who could bellow out 'Oft in the Stilly Night' like a clap of thunder and warble 'Wha'll be King but Charlie?' like a bull."<sup>19</sup> Several other recruits were introduced on the third night of the season. Mrs. Petrie and Tatem made their first appearance as Ursula and Conrad in *Much Ado about Nothing*; H. A. Williams as Darby in *The Poor Soldier*; and between the play and the farce, George

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

Hernizen sang a comic song "The Ring and the Countryman." It should be noted that Sol Smith errs in stating that William replaced Russell as principal low comedian.<sup>20</sup> Smith seems to have forgotten that Russell after a summer in the East returned to his old position in Caldwell's company. Also numbered among the company were Lemuel Smith, Sam Jones, Morton, Kidd, Tyrone, Crampton, Lear, Jackson, and Mesdames John, Williams, Higgins, and Kenny.

After the new members of the company had been introduced, Caldwell brought out his first star, Mrs. Alexander Drake. It may be remembered that she and her husband had been members of Caldwell's company in 1823; now she was undeniably "the first actress in the western country" and possessed of "a very grand manner." She came out on December 20 as Lady Randolph in *Douglas*; Miss Russell, also fresh from a short stay at the Park Theatre in New York, played young Norval. Following this performance the star appeared as Elvira in *Pizarro*, Meg Meriles in *Guy Mannering*, and on Christmas night she and Caldwell enacted the familiar story of Millwood and George Barnwell. On the sixth night of her engagement she played Helen McGregor to Caldwell's Rob Roy, Still making his first appearance of the season as Francis Osbaldistone. An added attraction on this evening was Payne's new drama, *'Twas I*, with the Delorme of Crooke and the Georgette of Mrs. Russell. The 30th saw a repetition of *Douglas* as well as the third successive performance of *'Twas I*, and the following day Mrs. Drake had her benefit. Her Adelgitha was supported by Anderson, Pearson, and Crooke; in the afterpiece, *The Hunter of the Alps*, Caldwell took the part of Felix, Mrs. Crooke that of Helen, and Miss Russell was Julio.

"In commemoration of January 1, 1815," the new year was ushered in with Samuel Woodworth's *Lafayette, or The Castle of Olmutz*. Mrs. Drake returned on January 2, 1829 to play the Queen to Caldwell's Hamlet. On the 3rd was presented the season's most popular play, *The Gambler's Fate, or A Lapse of Twenty Years* (possibly by H. M. Milner<sup>21</sup>) with a cast which included Crooke as Albert Germaine, Barry as Malcour, Mrs. Russell as Henry Germaine, Miss Russell as Rose, and Mrs. Crooke as Julia. It is not surprising that the play proved popular in a city where the "most pernicious of vices" was publicly and

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of Early Nineteenth Century Drama*, II, 347.

lawfully practiced. There is some doubt, however, as to its effects on the votaries of the roulette and the faro table. There are no records, or confessions, to prove that any of them saw it, though some ten performances were given before the end of the season.

After a run of three nights *The Gambler's Fate* was interrupted to allow Junius Brutus Booth to begin an engagement in "his own peculiar character of Richard." On January 9 Mrs. Drake made her final appearance as the Queen to Booth's Hamlet and Mrs. Crooke succeeded to the feminine leads. Performances as Sir Giles Overreach, Shylock, Macbeth, the Stranger, his first appearance in this character, King Lear, and Othello concluded Booth's engagement. On the 20th "at the request of many," he played Reuben Glenroy in *Town and Country*, depicting the generous mountaineer "with such force and simplicity of heart as makes vice shudder at its shadow and folly recoil at its own significance."<sup>22</sup> The benefit for the Catholic Association of Ireland, on January 24, brought him back as Octavian (*The Mountaineers*), and the following day he left for Natchez. Sol Smith records that part of the company was sent to Natchez under Booth's direction, but he does not say which actors these were.<sup>23</sup> Only the names of Mr. and Mrs. Crooke disappear from the daily notices at this time.

On January 21, New Orleans witnessed the début of George Holland, the English comedian. He made his bow as Billy Lackaday in the comedy, *Sweethearts and Wives*, and in C. A. Somerset's imitative burletta, *A Day after the Fair*, in which he portrayed six characters and Mrs. Russell three. On the 26th he offered two favorite pieces, *The Secret* by John Poole, and the entertainment entitled *Whims of a Comedian*, "consisting of Ventriloquialism, etc., the whole . . . recited, acted, sung, and gesticulated by Mr. Holland alone." On the 28th John Poole's farce, *Deaf as a Post*, followed a repetition of the *Whims of a Comedian*, and on the 30th he enacted Paul Pry. Though Richard Russell had introduced the character in 1827, Holland disregarded this performance of what he referred to as the "Surry Theatre Comedy," and spoke of his presentation of Poole's *Paul Pry* as the first in New Orleans.<sup>24</sup> On his sixth appearance Holland repeated *As Deaf as a Post* (Tristram Sappy) and in *She Stoops*

<sup>22</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, January 21, 1829.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, 57.

<sup>24</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, February 4, 1829.

to *Conquer* as Tony Lumpkin he introduced the comic song "Chump's Farm Yard" with imitations of cows, hens, sheep, turkeys, etc. For his benefit on February 2, he played Timothy Quaint in *The Soldier's Daughter* and repeated Somerset's burletta.

Before Holland completed his engagement, the celebrated vocalist Mrs. Edward Knight, made her debut (January 27) as Adela in James Cobb's comic opera, *The Haunted Tower*. The next day the *Louisiana Advertiser* pronounced judgment: "Mrs. Knight . . . fully realized all the anticipations which had been formed of the surpassing extent of her vocal powers . . . as a performer she is correct, natural, and pleasing." She enacted Rosetta (*Love in a Village*) and Catharine (*Catharine and Petruchio*) on the 29th, but not until her third appearance did New Orleans hear the songs which had made her famous. As Marianne in *The Dramatist* she introduced "The Last Rose of Summer" and "The Dashing White Sergeant"; as Margareta in the after-piece, *No Song, No Supper* she warbled "I've been warning," "With lowly suit and plaintive ditty," and "Across the downs this morning."

Holland was re-engaged on February 4 and the following day he and Mrs. Knight appeared in *Guy Mannering* as Dominie Sampson and Julia Mannering and as Gregory and Marian Ramsay in the after piece, *The Turn Out*. On this night Mrs. Sol Smith made her first appearance of the season as Lucy Bertram. On the 6th the Albina Mandeville of Mrs. Knight was followed by the New Orleans première of Moncrieff's drama, *The Somnambulist*, a performance which featured another "first appearance this season," that of the popular Mrs. Rowe. The next night the stars appeared as Diana Vernon and Bailie Nichol in *Rob Roy*, and Holland and Mrs. Rowe were Watty Cockney and Priscilla Tomboy in the afterpiece, *The Romp*. For her benefit on the 9th, Mrs. Knight offered the opera, *Brother and Sister*, and Samuel Beazley's farce, *Gretna Green*, in which she enacted Betty Finiken. Holland's engagement was now drawing to a close. On the 10th he was Mr. Dingle in *Love and Reason*; and for his benefit on the 12th, he appeared as Lapoache (*Fontainbleau*) and Jerry (*Tom and Jerry*).

The popular Mrs. Knight began a re-engagement on February 13. The manager announced that this had been requested by

"many respectable French families" who had been kept from the theatre by the very wet weather of the past two weeks. Her opening role was that of the Little Corporal in Thomas Morton's new play, *The Invincibles*, and so pleased was the audience with the songs and drills that the piece was given four times during the engagement. An interesting performance should have been that of the 18th when Mrs. Lacombe played Paul to Mrs. Knight's Virginia. For her farewell benefit on the 20th, Mrs. Knight introduced Charles Dibdin's opera, *The Lord of the Manor*. Need it be told that Annette sang "Coming through the Rye" and "The Dashing White Sergeant," or that the afterpiece was *The Invincibles*?

The day before Mrs. Knight's benefit, Booth returned from Natchez to begin his second and "positively his last engagement." His parts were Richard III, Sir Edward Mortimer, Brutus (Payne's tragedy), Bertram, and Malcour (*The Gambler's Fate*), and for his benefit on March 3, Orestes to Mrs. Drake's Hermione in *The Distressed Mother*. With Booth and Caldwell in the roles originally played by Crooke and Barry *The Gambler's Fate* proved even more attractive than the earlier representation. At the third performance on the 28th, it was played as a first piece in order that it might teach its lesson to the "juvenile branches of families."

The records of the first weeks in March are rich in the performances of stars. Cooper began an engagement on the 2nd as Virginius to Mrs. Rowe's Virginia; on the 4th his Damon was supported by the Calanthe of Mrs. Drake. The following day Mrs. Sloman, "the tragic actress from Covent Garden," and her husband, the "celebrated English Buffo Singer," made their débuts, she as Isabella and he as Sam Savoury in the farce, *The Fish Out of Water*. On the 6th, Booth, "reengaged in compliance with the general wish," was Iago to Cooper's Othello; the next evening he enacted the Stranger with the assistance of Mrs. Sloman. The bill for the 7th also included Sloman's personation of Delph (*Family Jars*) and several of his comic songs. On this occasion the admission to the parquet and dress circle was raised to \$1.50, a price which Caldwell charged frequently during this month. When, on March 9, *Venice Preserved* was advertised with Cooper as Pierre, Booth as Jaffier, and Mrs. Sloman as Belvidera, the *Louisiana Advertiser* commented: "Seldom has an audience in America had a chance of witnessing so much histrionic ex-

cellence concentrated on a single piece. . . . Mrs. Sloman is unquestionably a first-rate tragedian, probably the best, for a female, that has appeared on an American stage since the days of the peerless Mrs. Wignell."

After a week of inactivity Mrs. Drake made her last appearance on March 10. In these days of another star's popularity, the role in which she bowed herself out seems aptly titled; she was the Unknown Female in *The Foundling of the Forest*.

The inimitable Jane Placide returned to the boards of the American Theatre on March 12, her first appearance in almost two years. Those who attended the theatre on this evening saw a strongly cast *Pizarro*, Cooper playing Rolla, Booth, Pizarro, Caldwell, Alonzo, and Miss Placide, Elvira. As an added attraction the management presented Richard Peake's new farce, *The Haunted Inn*. Then on the 13th, while the tragedian rested, Mr. Sloman assisted Caldwell as Don Ferola Whiskerandos in *The Critic*, and Miss Russell led the Invincibles in their drills and marches. For the 14th *Othello* was announced, Booth to enact the title role supported by Cooper (Iago), Caldwell (Cassio), Mrs. Sloman (Desdemona) and Jane Placide (Emilia). There is a possibility that this performance was postponed, or that Mrs. Drake played Emilia, as a notice of March 23 states that Miss Placide, having recovered from her severe indisposition, was ready for her "second appearance."

Mrs. Sloman's benefit, on the 18th, again brought forth the constellation. Booth played Gloster, Cooper, Hastings, Mrs. Sloman, Jane Shore, and Mrs. Drake, Alicia. Mr. Sloman sang comic songs after the play and assisted his wife and Caldwell in the afterpiece, *Catherine and Petruchio*. For Cooper's benefit (March 19), Mrs. Sloman offered her services as Lady Macbeth. Two new members of the company made their débuts on this night. Ross was played by Mr. Watson and the part of Sophia in the afterpiece, *The Rendezvous*, by Mrs. Gray.

The parade of stars was not yet to end; the Slomans and Cooper were re-engaged. On the 20th, Mrs. Sloman threw aside her tragic mantle and essayed Lady Teazle; the 24th saw her in *The Provoked Husband*, playing Lady Townly to Caldwell's Lord Townly and surrounded by Russell, Gray, Mrs. Russell, and Mrs. Rowe, the comic force of the theatre. This latter occasion was Russell's benefit—and a proper time for Miss Russell to

show her filial devotion. To her belongs the honor of introducing John Poole's farce, *Old and Young, or The Four Mowbrays*. On the previous night Cooper had made his reappearance as Sir William Dorillon (in *Wives as They Were*), a role of his new to this city, and Jane Placide had returned as Miss Dorillon. Booth, too, had recovered from an indisposition, and on the 25th Caldwell again offered a combination of talent "greater . . . than has ever been presented at any one time in any Theatre on the Continent." The performance was *Jane Shore* and with the exception of the role of Alicia, now played by Jane Placide, the cast was that of March 18.

Miss Russell joined the stars on March 26 when her young Norval, "no ordinary treat," had the support of Cooper (Glenalvon), Booth (Old Norval), and Mrs. Drake (Lady Randolph). A bill made up of *The Gamester* and *The Gambler's Fate* presented on the 27th "the united talents" of Cooper, Caldwell, Miss Placide, and the Slomans, but unfortunately there is no record of the parts they took.

March 28 offered the *Romeo and Juliet* of Booth and Mrs. Sloman and the first appearance of the infant prodigy, Miss Louisa Lane, later the famous Mrs. John Drew. This nine-year-old child sustained six roles in W. H. Oxberry's burletta, *Actress of All Work*, among them being that of Goody Stubbins, a deaf lady eighty years old! At Cooper's farewell benefit the next night the little actress shone in *Twelve Precisely*, a farce of H. M. Milner's which was new to the city. *Julius Caesar*, the main piece of the evening, presented the beneficiary as Marc Antony, supported by Booth (Cassius), Caldwell (Brutus), Pearson (Julius Caesar), and Mrs. Drake (Portia). On her third appearance (March 31) Miss Lane held the stage alone, enacting Dr. Pangloss and *The Four Mowbrays*. The *Louisiana Courier* (April 2) now made its report: "We are opposed to bringing girls of her age upon the stage, when they should be in a seminary cultivating their minds and inculcating fixed principles of virtue and religion. However, we are constrained to say that she is a most astonishing child, and far exceeds all the *Infant Prodigies* we have hitherto seen." For her benefit, April 7, the "astonishing child" appeared as Richard III to Booth's Richmond, and repeated *Twelve Precisely*.

- As Miss Lane went through her repertoire, the Slomans prepared their farewell offerings. Mr. Sloman's benefit, on April 1,

presented the couple as Bob Acres and Lydia Languish, and introduced John Banim's new melodramatic piece, *The Sergeant's Wife*. Another novelty introduced the following day must be noted here. This was the "scenic burletta," *Paris and London, or a Trip to Both Cities*, by Moncrieff. Its outstanding feature was a Moving Diorama which represented a trip from Calais to London, the work of the theatre's artists, Mondelli and Plissenau. The piece was given for the fifth and last time on April 25, but the diorama was exhibited on special occasions, until the end of the season. For her night (April 4) Mrs. Sloman wisely returned to tragedy, offering for the first time in New Orleans R. L. Sheil's *Evadne*, Booth appearing as Ludovico. Her husband supplied the lighter touches as Tom in the farce, *The Intrigue*.

The most important event of the spring was the engagement of Edwin Forrest, "the distinguished American Tragedian" who had served his apprenticeship on the boards of the theatre he now visited as a star. Jane Placide and Booth were re-engaged to assist him, and on April 10 he commenced his engagement as Damon to the Pythias of Booth, the Calanthe of Miss Placide, and the Hermione of Mrs. Rowe. His second performance as Virginius (April 13) called forth the following comment from the *Louisiana Advertiser* of April 15:

In *Virginius* . . . he produces frequently the deepest effect, still on the whole, his *Virginius* is inferior to Cooper's. —Mr. Forrest wants that *ensemble* which the more mature judgment of Mr. Cooper gives to his acting—the former sometimes produces more *éclat*, he is frequently more flashy, but the latter throughout emits more heat. . . . We shall merely add that we entertain no doubt, that Mr. Forrest may, by incessant labour and judicious study, one day attain the highest pinnacle of histrionic fame.

On the 15th, Forrest enacted Othello to the Iago of Booth, the Emilia of Miss Placide and, we imagine, the Desdemona of Mrs. Rowe. His *William Tell*, on the 18th, was supported by the Albert of Miss Russell and the Emma of her mother. *King Lear*, with Mrs. Rowe as Cordelia, and a repetition of *William Tell*, concluded the first half of Forrest's engagement. *Brutus* with Jane Placide in the role of Tullia, was his benefit offering on the 24th, and for Miss Placide's benefit he appeared as Rolla. *Pizarro* was followed by *Hamlet*, *Venice Preserved*, *Richard III*, and for his farewell benefit on May 6, he presented Mrs. Mitford's new tragedy, *Rienzi*.

Information concerning this engagement is limited. The few extant critiques speak favorably but briefly of "the young and talented actor." The most illuminating of these is the puff which appeared in the *Louisiana Advertiser* on the day of his benefit.

We do not profess ourselves to be among those who admire the versatility of Mr. Forrest's tragic powers; we think, that like all those in his line, his genius has its limits, and when confined within his own peculiar sphere, emits those vivid flashes which strike the audience with admiration and awe, and ever and anon calls forth bursts of unrestrained applause. It pours from his eloquent tongue and lightens in his expressive eyes—it is supported in his dignified and manly action and justly stamps him as the Kemble of America. Who that has seen this genius of native growth, in some of his splendid efforts, can withhold the tribute due to native talent and native worth? . . . Let us support this tender sapling and prove to the pedants of Europe that our soil is fertile in genius and that her children know how to cherish and reward it.

The papers reported full houses during the engagement, but it is impossible to estimate accurately either the attendance or the receipts. The only record is that of May 8 when Forrest performed Damon for the benefit of the Asylum for Destitute Orphan Boys. The receipts on that night were said to be \$1,300.<sup>25</sup>

On those nights when Forrest was not playing, Booth appeared in familiar roles. Of these performances we need mention only that of April 16 when he enacted the Stranger to the Mrs. Haller of "a Lady of New Orleans, her first appearance on any stage." The *Louisiana Courier* the following day reported that this débutante had appeared quite disconcerted by the applause "constantly" bestowed upon her efforts, and that her attempt at the character was a failure.

The French dancers, Celeste and Constance, also made their first appearance on the 16th, appearing at the end of the play in a grand French *Pas de Deux*. Said the *Louisiana Courier* of the 17th: "They danced with much science and dexterity, and were loudly applauded. Some of the female spectators observed that they thought modesty had been left behind the scenes the while." On April 25, Celeste made her dramatic début as Myrtillo in *The Broken Sword* and followed it with Juliet in John Farrell's melodrama, *The Dumb Girl of Genoa*, and Julio in the Holcroft adap-

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, May 12, 1829.

tation, *Deaf and Dumb*. These roles gave her excellent opportunities to display her exquisite grace and pantomimic ability without making any demands on her limited knowledge of English. The benefit of "La Petite Constance," on May 9, offered the romantic spectacle, *Valentine and Orson*, Celeste in the role of Valentine and the beneficiary as Eglantine. This and *The Dumb Girl of Genoa* concluded the dancers' engagement on May 14.

Benefits were in order during the last two weeks of the season as the resident members of the company reappeared in their favorite roles. H. A. Williams, Mrs. Russell, and Gray displayed their talents in the old favorites, *The School of Reform*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *The School for Scandal*, and *The Belle's Stratagem*. On May 15 Pearson offered C. P. Clinch's dramatization of *The Spy*, a novelty in which Caldwell played Harvey Birch and the beneficiary Henry Wharton. The afterpiece, *Monsieur Tonson*, introduced Hosack, "from the Philadelphia, Charleston, and Baltimore Theatres." Caldwell's offering of *The West Indian* and *Is It a Lie?* brought the season to a close on May 22.

This season, unlike the previous one, had presented the best of the standard plays as well as several novelties. Though many of the latter were trifles such as Lunn's *All on the Wing*, C. A. Somerset's *The Poacher*, Brayley's *Wool Gathering*, Planché's *Half an Hour's Courtship* and the anonymous *Touch and Take*, they made for pleasant variety. It must be remembered, however, that the emphasis this season was not on novelties but on stars. While New York complained of the lack of talent, Manager Caldwell offered Cooper, Booth, Mrs. Sloman, and Mrs. Drake in the same play. Taking it all in all, this was a good season.

AMERICAN THEATRE, 1829-1830

Caldwell and his company returned in December, 1829, to a theatre which had undergone "numerous improvements" during the summer. Of the nature of these nothing is known except that the second tier had four additional boxes, "superbly furnished and decorated." The extensive redecorating of last season and of this can have been made with only one purpose in mind: Caldwell wished to number more of the "fashionable and fair" of the American population among his audiences, and this, he thought, was one way of attracting them. As a further inducement he announced in the first notice of the season: "The regulations for

the representations have been made with care—men of firmness and of gentlemanly deportment will mildly point out venial infringingments of the rules, but will assuredly exercise their power to put down every flagrant attempt to interrupt the general quiet.”

The staff of the theatre included Richard Russell, Stage Manager; A. Mondelli, Principal Artist; J. Varden, Principal Machinist; and P. Lewis, Leader of the Orchestra. Jane Placide was again a regular member of the company, and among the familiar names are found those of Pearson, Gray, Morton, Clarke, Williams, Fenno, Hernizen, Kenny, Carr and Mesdames Russell, Rowe, Lacombe, Gray, Kenny, Carr, and Miss Russell.

Having announced his intention of “getting up the finest old comedies with judicious casts” and of introducing “new pieces of tried merit,” Caldwell opened the theatre of December 7 with Buckstone’s melodrama, *Luke the Labourer*, and Morton’s *School of Reform*. Squire Chase in the melodrama and Lord Avondale in the comedy were played by John Gilbert, “from the Tremont Theatre, his first appearance in New Orleans.” Gilbert, later to become one of the finest of our native comedians, was but twenty at this time and had been on the stage only a year. J. M. Field, “from the Tremont,” and Miss Clarke, “from the Federal Street Theatre, Boston,” were also introduced in these pieces. In the farce, *The Hundred Pound Note*, which concluded the evening’s entertainment, Miss Clarke impersonated Miss Arlington “with the original Bavarian Girl’s Broom Song.” The next night in *Speed the Plough* a Mr. Marks, “from the Theatre Royal, London,” made his first appearance as Sir Abel Handy. On December 11, Payne’s opera of *Clari, the Maid of Milan* had its New Orleans première, Jane Placide in the title role. In the farce of the evening Miss Russell, now all of twelve, led the Invincibles in their exercises and sang, “Oh never fall in Love, dear Girls.” Just five years ago she had been one of the children who took part in the first New Orleans production of the *Cataract of the Ganges*. Planché’s new drama of *Charles XII* was the presentation of the 12th; on the 14th was introduced Douglas Jerrold’s melodrama, *Ambrose Gwinett*, with H. G. Pearson as Ambrose. After Payne’s farce, *The Lancers*, on December 16, the march of novelties ceased for a while.

On that day James Howard, the first star of the season, made his début. As befitted a vocalist, he opened a "short engagement" as Henry Bertram in *Guy Mannering*, numbering among his songs "Oft in the Stilly Night," "as sung by him 100 nights at Chatham Theatre, New York." Performances of *The Devil's Bridge*, Jane Placide as Countess Rosalina to his Count Belino, *Brother and Sister*, *Love in a Village*, *Sweethearts and Wives*, *John of Paris*, *Blue Beard*, and numerous musical afterpieces carry us up to his benefit on January 7.

Five days after Howard's first appearance, the tragedian, Thomas S. Hamblin, had begun his engagement as Virginius, the role of Virginia being played by Mrs. McClure. This lady was a new member of the company and with her husband had been introduced but two days before (December 19) in J. T. C. Rodwell's farce, *The Young Widow*. In the plays which followed, *Virginius*, *Macbeth*, *The Revenge*, and *George Barnwell*, Jane Placide supported the tragedian. For his benefit, on January 4, he offered *William Tell*, Albert being played by Miss Russell. Joe Cowell, the English comedian, commenced his engagement on this night, appearing as Crack in the farce of *The Turnpike Gate* and singing his celebrated comic song, "Gallamaufry or The Smokers' Club." The following day he appeared in *Paul Pry* and *Lock and Key*, two favorite pieces.

Miss Lydia Kelly had arrived by this time; on January 6 she enacted Letitia Hardy, "with a song," to Caldwell's Doricourt and appeared in the afterpiece, *Husbands and Wives*. At Howard's benefit on the 7th, this star shone again as Floretta in T. Dibdin's operetta, *The Cabinet*, presented for the first time in New Orleans. Cowell, in the role of Whimsicolo, sang two duets with Miss Kelly. On the following day, "in honor of that ever memorable day in 1815," was introduced the native play, *The Eighth of January*. It is perhaps worthy of note that the editor of the *Louisiana Courier* believed the author of the national piece to be "Johnny Wyers, the banker poet of New Orleans," and not Richard Penn Smith as announced in the bills. Mrs. LaCombe sang "L'Orleanaise, Hymne de Victoire," the composition of a Louisianian; and the entertainment concluded with *Much Ado About Nothing*, Miss Kelly playing Beatrice to Caldwell's Benedict.

Hamblin and Howard were now re-engaged to give "éclat" to several operas in which Miss Kelly was to appear, but the triumvirate was never to be. Her engagement was suddenly broken off and she did not appear again. For the next week Cowell and Hamblin played on alternate nights: Hamblin in *Damon and Pythias*, on January 11; Cowell as Mawworm in *The Hypocrite* on the 12th; Hamblin in *The Stranger* on January 13, followed by *The Turnpike Gate*, with young Cowell as Crack. An unusual attraction was presented on January 15, *The Merchant of Venice* with Hamblin enacting Shylock; Cowell, Launcelot Gobbo; Caldwell, Gratiano; Howard, Lorenzo, in which character he introduced two popular songs; and Jane Placide, Portia. The next day Cowell took his benefit, offering J. B. Buckstone's new piece, *The May Queen*, in which he was Caleb Pipkin. Young Cowell who had volunteered "his powerful aid," sang "The Coal Black Rose" and played Chip to his father's Robert in the farce, *A Chip of the Old Block*.

With this the Cowells departed, and tragedy and melodrama once more held sway. Hamblin appeared in Massinger's play, *The Fatal Dowry*, "first time in New Orleans"; in *Virginus*, "by particular request"; and for his farewell benefit, *Richard III* and *The Review* (Looney Mactwelter, "for this night only"). Communications such as the following in the *Louisiana Advertiser* of January 23 testify to the artistic success of Hamblin's engagement. "We have witnessed no instance in which Mr. Hamblin has not equalled, if not exceeded our expectations, and this is saying much, for we anticipated much." "Yet," continues the writer, "we are sorry that Mr. Caldwell has not been better paid for his devotion to the public, and hope his unwearied exertions to please, will in the future be better rewarded."

These hopes were realized with the engagement of the youthful Miss Clara Fisher. Gentlemen had been allowed to secure boxes for the whole of her twelve-night engagement, and all performances were played to "overflowing houses." On the opening night, January 25, after acting the part of Letitia Hardy, in which character she sang "I'm a brisk and sprightly lad," and "Poll dang it, how'd ye do," and danced a Sailor's Hornpipe, she went through the antics of Little Pickle. It must have pleased Caldwell to read in the *Louisiana Advertiser* (January 26) that a "brilliant assemblage of native belles and beaux" witnessed his representation of the polite and sensitive Doricourt. Perhaps

some of them returned the next night to see Jerrold's new melodrama, *Black Eyed Susan*, and to pay tribute to Howard, since this was announced as his last appearance.

At her second performance Miss Fisher impersonated Albina Manderville in *The Will* and the four Mowbrays in the afterpiece, *Old and Young*. The *Louisiana Advertiser* of January 28 fails to mention how many rounds of applause greeted her famous song, "Hurrah for the Bonnets of Blue," but it gives a detailed account of the farce.

... Her inimitable representation of the Mowbrays was, beyond all doubt, the most perfect piece of acting of the kind we ever beheld in New Orleans. Master Hector stormed and hectoring it about with all the mischievous humour of a rattle brained boy; and Master Gobbleton devoured with avidity the partridge pie of his uncle with the sang froid of a natural glutton, while the house rang again with burst of laughter and merriment. Master Fopping Mowbray was certainly a most exquisite hit at the foppling exquisites of the day. We thought indeed the charming little Clara had abandoned the stage, so unlike herself was she in those three characters, until we recognized her in the amiable and docile Matilda Mowbray at the closing of the piece.

The fair star played Beatrice to Caldwell's Benedick and sustained six characters in *The Actress of All Work* on her third appearance. On January 30 she introduced Colly Cibber's comedy, *She Would and She Would Not*, which was followed by that favorite of the last season, *The Invincibles*. The distinguished Henry Clay witnessed this performance, doubtless receiving as much pleasure from it as he did from the six rounds of applause which greeted him on his entrance.<sup>26</sup>

A fine old comedy, a new farce, and the reappearance of Joe Cowell made February 1 a memorable day for theatre-goers. Clara Fisher's Lady Teazle was supported by Caldwell's Charles Surface and Cowell's Sir Peter; in Buckstone's new farce, *The Dead Shot*, Cowell was Mr. Timid, Clara Fisher was Louisa. The second performance of the month was announced as "Howard's benefit and last appearance." To date this was Howard's third "last appearance," and several more were to be announced before he departed with the company at the conclusion of the season on May 22. As seems to have been customary with him on these

<sup>26</sup> *Argus*, February 1, 1830.

occasions, he enacted Blue Peter in *Black Eyed Susan* and sang the lead in a musical afterpiece. Arnold's comedy, *Man and Wife*, on February 3 introduced Clara Fisher as Helen Worrett; and on the 5th she appeared in Mrs. Inchbald's *Lovers' Vows* and as Arinette, a Little Jockey, in Dimond's *Youth, Love and Folly*, "a new farce never acted here." Mrs. Inchbald's comedy, *The Country Girl*, "first time in ten years," presented the star as Miss Peggy and that same evening she enacted Paul in the popular afterpiece, *The Wandering Boys*.

The week of February 8 was an unusually interesting one. It opened with Miss Fisher in *Wives as They Were* and *The Actress of All Work*; on the 9th, Cowell appeared in *The Hypocrite* and in Barham Levius' farce, *Maid or Wife*. On Wednesday, Master Russell enacted Tom Thumb after Miss Fisher had played Juliet to the Romeo of Pearson and the Mercutio of Caldwell. On Thursday, Miss Placide, "having recovered from her late severe accident," returned to the stage as Madame Clermont in Dimond's play, *Adrian and Orilla*. Clara Fisher's personations of Clari, Arinette, Rosalind, and Moggie McGilpin (*The Highland Reel*) brought the eventful week to a close. The star concluded her engagement the following Monday as Violante in *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret* but returned as a volunteer at young Cowell's benefit on February 17 when she appeared as Little Pickle and as Peggy in *The Turnpike Gate*. When her departure for Charleston was delayed, she performed Lady Teazle for the benefit of the Orphan Boys' Asylum on the 18th.

Herr Cline, the celebrated artist of the Elastic Cord, began a short engagement on February 19, but after two performances illness forced him to postpone his next appearance until March. Herr Cline's dances on the cord and his "unequalled display of Gladiatorial Attitudes" were received with great favor. Reported the *Argus* of February 20: "Herr Cline has the merit of originality and in him we no longer see a common rope dancer. . . . He paints in turn, filial affection, love and anger; the most tragic passions he also delineates with the greatest fidelity, and in his jealous and furious transports he might be mistaken for Othello or Orestes. . . ."

On Monday, February 22, the city was to have had its first glimpse of Madame Feron, "from the Grand Theatre San Carlos at Naples, La Scala at Milan, Italian Opera at Paris, Drury

Lane, London, and Park Theatre, New York." But Madame Feron was "indisposed" and her début was necessarily postponed. In the interim before she could begin her engagement, Caldwell presented several novelties. Peake's popular new musical farce, *My Master's Rivals*, was performed on the 25th; on the 27th among the entertainments offered at Caldwell's annual benefit was "The Coal Black Rose" arranged as a duet with young Cowell as Sambo and young Russell as the dark-hued Rose. By March 1 Herr Cline had recovered sufficiently to make a grand Ascension from the stage to the gallery, "upwards of forty-five feet in height." The performance of *The Maid and the Magpie* the following day was enlivened by the *Pas de Deux* of the Corps de Ballet which had been performing at the French theatre. This little troupe consisting of Benoni, Feltman, Madame Feltman, and Virginia Benoni presented during their short engagement at the American Theatre, *Osmar and Arsana*, a ballet pantomime "never acted in this country," and the new melodramatic ballet of action, *Jocko, or The Monkey of Brazil*.

Madame Feron, having recovered by this time, made her début in *The Barber of Seville* on March 3. The critic in the *Argus* of March 5 was not enthusiastic about the long awaited event: "Madame Feron had a thousand difficulties to contend with; she found herself placed along side of actors, who, to say the least were below mediocrity in the opera, and but little capable of feeling the sublime inspiration of Rossini. She had to contend against an orchestra badly directed, although composed of some good musicians. . . . Yet she astonished and delighted all who heard her. . . ." Alas for the operatic aspirations of poor Cowell (Figaro) and Howard (Count Almaviva).

Her second performance, which included *The Cabinet* and the musical farce of *The Prize*, in which she was Caroline with a "French Mock Bravura and an Italian Cavatina," was presented to an audience which was predominately French. Madame Feron was a brilliant soprano, but at the American Theatre she had not the support needed for more ambitious pieces. She was forced to appear in those operas and melodramas which were familiar to the company, *Rob Roy*, *Love in a Village*, *John of Paris*, *The Sultan*, etc. True, on March 15 there was presented for the first time *The Libertine*, "a literal translation of Mozart's celebrated opera of *Il Don Giovanni* (sic) with music by H. B.

Bishop." Yet even into this was introduced "The Dashing White Sergeant." For her benefit she offered Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, and John Walker's new melodramatic anecdote, *Napoleon, or The Emperor and the Soldier*. On the 26th she was Carolina in Dimond's operetta, *The Young Hussar*, "first time in New Orleans." At Howard's benefit, on March 31, she played Catharine in the "grand melodramatic poetic spectacle," *The Exile*, numbering among her songs, "The Arab Steed" and "Once on a Time a Pert Young Ape." On April 3, Madame Feron made her last appearance in *The Castle of Andalusia*, an opera of O'Keeffe's which was new to the city. Her engagement cannot have been a profitable one, as recurrent articles speak of the small patronage which she received. The comic trifles of Clara Fisher and Joe Cowell had set the musical standard at the American Theatre this season, and to that may be attributed the lack of enthusiasm which greeted the Italian airs of this more talented singer.

Though Madame Feron played to thin houses, certain of the March performances must have won public favor. There was the farewell benefit of the Cowells on March 16, when Young Cowell and Young Russell enacted the two Dromios in the *Comedy of Errors*, and sang the now famous duet, "The Coal Black Rose," Howard obliging with the equally familiar and popular "Savourneen Deelish." Two days later Caldwell presented a new skit, *Paul Pry at Dover*; the moving Diorama from last year's popular *Paris and London*; and Moncrieff's melodrama, *The Lear of Private Life* adapted from Mrs. Opie's novel, *Father and Daughter*. The latter evidently "took," for it was presented twice during the following week. *The Comedy of Errors* was repeated for the benefit of the young Russells on March 20. A splendid Drop-Scene painted by Mondelli on 1500 square feet of canvas was exhibited on the 23rd; and "in compliment to the New Orleans Jockey Club," Caldwell appeared as Goldfinch in *The Road to Ruin* on March 25.

Mlle. Celeste and Constance began a starring engagement the day before Madam Feron's benefit, and until May 1 these two delighted crowded houses with displays of French dancing, grand ballets of action, and their acting in new and spectacular melodramas.

The most important novelties of this season seem to have been reserved for the last two months. On April 6 Caldwell brought out *Irma, or The Prediction*, a new tragedy "by a very

young gentleman of our city," James M. Kennicott. This had won the \$300 premium offered by the manager the last year; and though the critics of New Orleans found it faulty in plot arrangement, a defect which they attributed to the author's unfamiliarity with scenic representations and stagecraft, they praised its originality, declaring that in incident and highly wrought scenes it was inferior to no production of modern date.<sup>27</sup> Jane Placide played Irma, who was brought to her ruin by Remington's prediction that she would become a murderess, and Caldwell was "the audacious Remington." The critics reported in detail on the first two performances of this native play. According to "M.D.S." in the *Louisiana Courier* of April 7, Caldwell was incapable of doing justice to his part. "Mr. Caldwell was not intended for a tragedian and especially not for such a one as last night's piece required." Yet "Z" of the *Louisiana Advertiser*, April 12, saw "some peculiar touches" in the manager's delineation and several very fine imitations of Charles Kemble which could not fail to please. The character of Irma suited the talents of Jane Placide, said the critic, and when better acquainted with it she would make it "more than interesting." "Z" was especially pleased with Field as that actor appeared to have overcome "the affected and boyish manner of speaking through his nose" which characterized his other parts. The critics who attended the second performance of *Irma* on April 12 found more to condemn. Not only was the beautiful poetry of the author "mangled" by the principal characters but "an episode of a most indecorous character" was introduced in one of the scenes between Pearson and Field. The *Argus* of April 13 reported that Field had forgotten his lines and had retired from the stage in confusion when Pearson broke into the prompter's words with "Speak, Sir, I've given you your cue!" According to the *Courier* of April 19, Pearson himself had been at fault several times in the past few weeks; in fact on one occasion had saved himself from disgrace only by leaving the stage in the midst of a speech and returning to read it with a book in his hand.

There is no question that the actors had too many new lines to learn these days. Celeste's benefit on the 17th introduced the grand historical drama, *Masaniello, or the Dumb Girl of Portici*, "Translated from the French by H. H. Milner, music and

<sup>27</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, April 6, 1830.

overture by Witt, scenery by Mondelli, Machinery by Varden, Dresses by Ammerman, Properties by Lewis, and the whole produced under the direction of Celeste." The character of Masaniello, the humble fisherman of Naples, was represented by Pearson; that of his sister Fenella (*La Muete De Portici*) by Celeste. In the last act the audience looked on "A View of the Bay of Naples, bordering on Portici and Tore Del Greco. VIEW OF VESUVIUS. Terrific explosion!! Forked lightnings rend the sky; the Burning lava impetuously flows down the side of the mountain, and the whole country becomes AWFULLY ILLUMINATED. Popular tumult and Death of Masaniello." A Mr. Jones, referred to in the advertisements as the celebrated singer from the Bowery Theatre, rendered comic songs after this exciting scene, and as a grand finale, Celeste, in male attire à la *Chevalier de France*, executed a great variety of French dancing with the "pretty little Constance." Newspapers reported that the receipts of this night were \$1020. Celeste was immediately re-engaged for four more nights of *Masaniello*. At Constance's benefit on April 24, after a variety of dances and the petite comedy, *Paul and Peter Shack (My Master's Rival)*, the last act of *Masaniello* was given. For their farewell benefit on May 1, the dancers offered the "Grand Asiatic Ballet of Action, *The Caliph of Bagdad*," with splendid dances, dresses and decorations. . . . As performed at the Bowery Theatre." It would be interesting to know who supported Celeste (Islam, the Caliph) and Constance (Zetulbe). The cast of the ballet called for nine dancers.

On April 26, came "a new national melodrama," Captain Stephen Glover's adaptation of *The Last of the Mohicans*. The notices stated it had been played with distinguished success at Baltimore and Charleston; New York was not to see it until December, 1831. The cast included Pearson as Magua, Old Gray as Hawkeye, Russell as Gamut, and Mrs. Rowe as Cora. Pearson was the star of the presentation, depicting Magua so faithfully that the author and "competent judges" said the role could not have been bettered by Forrest himself. At the fourth performance, on April 30, Miss Clarke was forced to take the place of Mrs. Rowe whose absence was occasioned by the sudden death of a little daughter. Though she was "quite too fair, too fascinating and too timid for the stern, unbending and dignified dark-haired Cora," her acting was praised as being natural and affecting.

As early as April 1 "Old Gray" had taken his benefit, giving "in honor of the day" Reynolds' comedy, *Folly as it Flies*. Now benefits and novelties followed fast on one another. On Russell's night the city was introduced to Cumberland's comedy, *The Jew*, Russell enacting the role of Sheva and Master Russell that of Jabel. This was Russell's eighth successive season in New Orleans, and we may be sure that on this occasion a large audience paid homage to his merits as a "general and useful comedian" and as stage manager. On the 30th, "Old Gray" distinguished himself as Jonathan Postfree in *The Honest Yankee*, a piece by L. Beach which, though introduced in 1807, had never been given here. Mrs. Rowe revived John Millingen's *Ladies at Home* for her return to the boards on May 3 and enacted Christine in the long popular *She Would Be a Soldier*. Pizarro was presented for the first time this season at Pearson's benefit on May 5, Howard assisting as the High Priest. After the play Hernizen sang a new comic song, "A Hit at the Fashions of New Orleans." The Clarkes' benefit on the 8th brought out two pieces "never acted here": H. M. Miller's comedy *One Hundred and Two* and T. J. Dibdin's *The Sea Serpent*, a nautical pantomime in which Miss M. E. Clarke, as the Fairy of the Main, made her first appearance on any stage.

Jane Placide's benefit on May 10 offered both the old and the novel. After *The Soldier's Daughter*, with the beneficiary as Widow Cheerly, Caldwell as Frank Heartall and Mr. Langton, "from the New York, Philadelphia and Boston Theatres," as Malfort, Jr., there was presented the grand romantic drama, *Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogine*. Mondelli appears to have surpassed himself in the scenery for this play of Thomas Dibdin's. "The last scene represents a CEMETERY BY MOONLIGHT. The whole stage is occupied by tombs, graves, etc., . . . the shadows of Imogine and Alonzo are seen ascending in the CHARIOT OF DEATH, surrounded by CLOUDS. As it rises the surrounding tombs open, and the skeletons rise to look upon the passing scene. The whole is illuminated with a blue vapour, and the Curtain falls." Needless to say, the play was repeated.

All of the Russells lent "their powerful aid" at Mrs. Russell's benefit on May 12. After Russell had played Tony Lumpkin to his wife's Miss Hardcastle, the two younger members of the family sang, accompanying themselves on the Piano Forte. As a grand finale Miss Russell sustained six characters in the American première of R. Haworth's one act piece, *The Disguises*.

And still the novelties came. Mondelli's benefit on the 15th featured "A Splendid Naval Exhibition of the Glorious Feats of the American Navy against Tripoli in 1803," a representation of the naval action itself, by combination of Painting and Machinery. A new play, Planchè's *Green Eyed Monster*, was given on May 17; on the 18th and two days thereafter was exhibited a railroad and steam carriage, "its first appearance on the stage." Even the joint benefit of Mesdames Gray and McClure with the Naval Exhibition and Mrs. McClure's personation of Harry Clinton (*El Hyder*) pales before the stage début of this 1830 steam carriage.

Caldwell's benefit ended the season on May 22. On this occasion the manager sustained five characters in Mrs. Centlivre's comedy, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, and introduced Knowles' "Hibernian melodrama," *Brian Boroihme*. Howard sang the popular "Savourneen Deelish," thus bringing to a close his engagement of nine nights which had begun on December 16.

This had been a good theatrical season. James Howard, the first star to appear, had remained all season. Hamblin, Cowell, Miss Kelly, Miss Fisher, Herr Cline, Madame Feron, and Celeste and Constance had followed in rapid succession. Forty novelties had been introduced, among them the plays of five native writers. The editor of the *Louisiana Courier* (May 22) may act as spokesman for those who frequented the theatre this season: "When we recollect with what unremitting assiduity Mr. Caldwell has devoted his time and talents to amuse the public and contribute to the refinement of the age, and improve its taste, and above all keep up a proud national feeling, we cannot but award him our united approbation."

#### AMERICAN THEATRE, 1830-1831

The American Theatre, "improved and newly and splendidly decorated," opened for the eighth season on December 15, 1830. Though several favorites were missing from the company, even more capable performers had been engaged to replace them, and in continuation of the policy initiated in 1829, Manager Caldwell promised that the "first talent of the country" would be brought forward in regular succession.

In honor of "the recent and glorious Revolution in France," the entertainments of the opening night began with a display of the Tri-Colored Flag and the singing of "The Marseillaise Hymn"

by the entire company. Caldwell and Jane Placide appeared as Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*; and Sol Smith, who now returned after an absence of two years, delighted "the respectable though not fashionable audience" with his performance in Thomas Dibdin's new musical farce, *The Two Gregories*. Mrs. Sol Smith, also making her first appearance in two years, assisted with songs and glees through the evening.

The stars came out early this season. George Holland opened his engagement on the second night with the favorite pieces, *Paul Pry* and *A Day After the Fair*, and continued in *Sweethearts and Wives*, *The Secret*, *Whims of a Comedian*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *The Honest Thieves*, and *Deaf as a Post*. For his benefit on December 30 he enacted Jacky Hawbuck in *Town and Country*, a part which had not been among those offered during his first visit in 1829.

Thomas Morton's farce, *A Roland for an Oliver*, was introduced on the 17th. On the 20th Mr. and Mrs. Joe Cowell made their first appearance as Sir Peter and Lady Teazle; Cowell also played Crack in *The Turnpike Gate*. The Cowells had been engaged as regular members of the company this season, Joe to replace Richard Russell as stage manager and low comedian, Mrs. Cowell to perform the comedy leads, and Young Cowell to fill in whenever he was needed. James M. Scott, the tragedian from the Bowery Theatre in New York, made his bow on December 22 in *William Tell*. *She Stoops to Conquer*, on the following day, re-introduced two old favorites who had not been seen for seven years, Mr. and Mrs. Noah Ludlow. The cast included Ludlow as Young Marlow, Holland as Tony Lumpkin, Mrs. Ludlow as Mrs. Hardcastle, and Mrs. Cowell as Miss Hardcastle.

The combined force of tragic and comic talent drew a "full house" on December 24 when Scott played Charles DeMoor to Mrs. Rowe's Amelia in *The Robbers*, and the afterpiece, *The Honest Thieves*, enlisted the services of Holland, Cowell, and Ludlow. The *Louisiana Courier* reported the next day that these comedians "amused the risible faculties of the audience to such a degree . . . that the very walls rang again with the boisterous plaudits of the assembled multitudes." On Christmas night the management presented *George Barnwell* as a "beacon to the rising generation whereby they may learn to avoid the rocks and shoals on which so many promising youths have been shipwrecked

in their voyage of life." At the conclusion of Lillo's sad tale Mr. Brown, the celebrated professor of Grecian exercises, went through his amusing Christmas gambols, and Holland and the Cowells appeared in the burletta, *Bombastes Furioso*, young Cowell taking the part of the General.

The veteran Cooper came the last of December "to add fresh laurels to his hoary fame." His opening performance as Damon on the 27th was supported by the Pythias of Scott, the Calanthe of Jane Placide, and the Hermione of Mrs. Rowe. He was Othello to Scott's Iago, Mrs. Rowe's Desdemona, Jane Placide's Emilia, and Caldwell's Cassio. The performance of *Virginius* on his third night introduced in the role of Icillius E. S. Conner, a new member of the company. Inclement weather kept many from seeing *Hamlet*, performed on January 3 with a strong cast which included Cooper in the title role, Caldwell as the Ghost, Scott as Horatio, Cowell as the Grave Digger, Jane Placide as Ophelia, and Joseph Page, "first appearance in three years," as Polonius. On the 5th the star appeared as Sir John Falstaff in *King Henry IV, Part I*, and though the character was out of his line, his interpretation was heralded as "a *chef d'oeuvre* of the ironic art and every way worthy of Shakespeare and his distinguished representation."<sup>28</sup> In the cast were Scott (King Henry IV), Ludlow (Prince of Wales), Cowell (Francis), Holland (First Carrier), and Edward Raymond (Hotspur), a new member of the company who had made his debut on January 1 as Rolla (*Pizarro*).

The roles which followed Falstaff were familiar ones: Beverly in *The Gamester*, Lord Hastings in *Jane Shore*, Marc Anthony, Shylock, and Pierre in *Venice Preserved*. For his farewell benefit on January 17 he offered *Henry VIII*, a play not previously seen in New Orleans. He portrayed Cardinal Wolsey; Scott was King Henry, Ludlow, Cromwell, Jane Placide, Queen Katharine, and Mrs. Rowe, Ann Bullen. Ludlow recalls that tears flowed from Cooper's eyes in the scene between Wolsey and Cromwell at the close of the third act and that he could not restrain his as he thought of the past days when Cooper had "trode the ways of glory."<sup>29</sup>

There were other stars at the theatre during these weeks. On December 28 William Pelby had begun a short engagement as DeValmont in *The Foundling of the Forest* and followed it with

<sup>28</sup> *Louisiana Courier*, January 6, 1831.

<sup>29</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 371.

personations of Reuben Glenroy in *Town and Country*, Rienzi, and Brutus in Payne's play of that name. He had been re-engaged to appear with Cooper in *Venice Preserved* and in *Henry IV*.

Holland's engagement had ended on January 1, but he, too, had been reengaged and for the remainder of Cooper's stay the two played on alternate nights or Holland appeared in the after-piece. The comedian's roles were familiar ones except for Gaby Grim in the younger Colman's interlude, *We Fly by Night*, and Verges in Clara Fisher's opening performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* on January 19. His benefit bill, on the 20th, was made up of *Frederick the Great*; *Whims of a Comedian*; Brown's Grecian Exercises; Madame Edouard's dancing; and R. J. Raymond's farce, *Cherry Bounce*. Two days after this, Holland began a third engagement as Dan in Colman's *John Bull*; Scott played Peregrine, Cowell Dennis Brulgruddery, and Frederick, a recent addition to the company, was Frank Rochdale. During this engagement the star appeared in several new roles: as Soto in *She Would and She Would Not*, Stephen Harrowby in *The Poor Gentleman*, Brusque in *The Invincibles*, and Billy Black in *The Hundred Pound Note* (February 7).

Comedy was the standard fare these nights. Clara Fisher, who had begun her engagement in *Much Ado About Nothing* on January 19, followed it with *The Will, Old and Young*, *She Would and She Would Not*, and *The Spoiled Child*. She had added to her repertoire since the last visit and on her fourth appearance introduced Thomas Bayly's petite comedy, *Perfection*. Her Kate O'Brien with the songs, "Kate Kearney" and "Hurrah for the Emerald Isle" won immediate favor, and the piece was repeated three times. Another novelty was John Faucit's melodrama, *The Miller's Maid*, in which she played Phoebe to the Giles of Scott. Other new parts for her were Miss Arlington in *The Hundred Pound Note*, Lady Restless in *All in the Wrong*, Clari in Payne's play of that name, Catherine in Buckstone's new comedy, *A Husband at Sight*, Harriet in *Is He Jealous?*, and for her benefit, on February 17, Betty Finiken in *Gretna Green*.

On "off nights" when neither Clara Fisher nor Holland performed, Caldwell introduced several important novelties. The first of these, on January 29, was *Paul Jones*, a nautical melodrama which W. H. Wallack had adapted from Cooper's novel, *The Pilot*. Scott enacted Long Tom Coffin, a role that had been

associated with his name since he played it in the New York première in 1824. Tryon was Barnstable, Field, Captain Boroughcliff, Anderson, the Pilot, and Mrs. Rowe, Kate Plowden. "Rapturous applause" greeted the first two performances though it was felt by several that the actors had been miscast. Said "Romeo" in the *Louisiana Courier* on January 31: "Mrs. Rowe's Kate Plowden was very spirited and such a girl as her Kate would never have run away with such a lieutenant as Mr. Tryon's Barnstable." Though the play appealed to the patriotic citizens of New Orleans, it was reported that the extreme cold weather kept many from attending its third performance on February 3. The afterpiece on this night was *The Rendezvous*, mentioned here only because it introduced Miss Mary Vos, the daughter of John Vos who acted in Cargill's little troupe in 1817.

Another native play, the anonymous *Miantonimoh*, or *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, was presented on February 5 with the author in the role of Matacom, a Wampanoag Chief. According to an announcement which appeared in the *Louisiana Advertiser* on January 18, this play had been introduced in Richmond and was not the *Miantonimoh* which had been given in New York. Holland's benefit on the 10th brought out another novelty, *The Hamlet Travestie*, written "by the author of the rejected addresses" stated the advertisement. It is easy to imagine the laughter which must have greeted the Hamlet of young Cowell, the Ophelia of Holland, and the "Grand Set To—Anglaise" of the last scene.

A melodrama, *The Avenger*, was introduced at Scott's benefit on February 12. This was announced as his last appearance but on the 22nd the play was repeated with him still in the title role. "A thin but very attentive and discriminating audience" saw a revival of Kennicott's *Irma* on the 15th. One of this body commented in the *Louisiana Advertiser* the next day: "The part of Irma by Jane Placide was one of the most powerful efforts we have witnessed in a long while; it can only be compared with the Imogine of Mrs. Duff in *Bertram*." Tragedy was the offering of February 16 when, for Cowell's benefit, Clara Fisher enacted Juliet to the Romeo of Edward Raymond, the comedian appearing as Peter. A grand "Dramatic Masquerade" concluded the bill.

When Clara Fisher left for Natchez on February 18, her place was taken by Mr. and Mrs. Cramer Plumer who had just

returned from there. This year Caldwell had decided to reopen the Natchez theatre for a short season, and sometime around January 21 Ludlow and a small troupe left New Orleans.<sup>30</sup> In his account of the season Ludlow lists as his associates Mr. and Mrs. Sol Smith, Mrs. McClure, McCafferty, and Miss Petrie.<sup>31</sup> Sol Smith refers to his brother Lemuel as one of the group.<sup>32</sup> Other members of the company were John Gilbert, E. S. Conner, and Marks.<sup>33</sup>

The "fatal glance" of Kate Kearney was not forgotten even after Clara Fisher's departure and for a while the Plumers played to thin houses. They opened on the 18th in *The Devil's Bridge* and *Winning a Husband* and continued in *Love in a Village*, *The Turn Out*, *Rob Roy* (with Scott replacing Caldwell in the title role), *Of Age Tomorrow*, *The Cabinet*, Poole's *Scape Grace*, "never acted here," *The Soldier's Daughter*, and *Rosina*. After a two-day rest during which the management introduced Douglas Jerrold's interlude, *The Smoked Miser*, and Charles Kean made his bow, the Plumers continued in musical pieces, playing now on alternate nights to the young tragedian. They were Donna Isadora and Don Sylvia in *Brother and Sister*; Patrick and Dermont in *The Poor Soldier*; Diana Vernon and Francis Osbaldistone in *Rob Roy*; Lucy and Henry Bertram in *Guy Mannering*; and Justine and Colonel de Courey in *Rencontre*, a French adaptation by Planché. Mrs. Plumer was also featured as Letitia Hardy, Lady Teazle, Miss Arlington (*The Hundred Pound Note*), Clari, Juliana (*The Honeymoon*), and Don Giovanni (*Giovanni in London*). On March 21 the vocalist gave *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Love and Mercy* and departed for Mobile.

The receipts from Charles Kean's "overflowing houses" may have compensated for the "empty benches" during the Plumers' engagement. The young star had won immediate favor in his opening performance of *Richard III*, and with his second appearance as Sir Giles Overreach his reputation was established. Later parts for him were Sir Edward Mortimer (*The Iron Chest*), Reuben Glenroy (*The Mountaineers*), The Stranger, Brutus (in Payne's tragedy), Felix (*The Hunter of the Alps*), and for his last appearance on March 22, Othello.

<sup>30</sup> The names of Ludlow and several of his fellow actors disappear from the New Orleans notices after this date. W. B. Gates in his article, "The Theatre in Natchez," gives January 26, 1831 as the opening date of the Natchez season. *The Journal of Mississippi History*, III (April, 1941), 89.

<sup>31</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 373.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, 69.

<sup>33</sup> Gates, *loc. cit.*, III, 90.

Clara Fisher returned as Kean prepared to leave for Natchez and on the 23rd enacted Lady Restless in *All in the Wrong* and Louisa in *The Dead Shot*. At Caldwell's benefit on the 25th she offered the popular *Perfection*. Her first appearance as Alice in *Love and Reason* called forth the following comment from the *Louisiana Advertiser* (March 29).

The character of Alice is most beautifully characteristic of Miss Fisher's style of acting, which is mainly conspicuous for the continued play of her intelligent features, over which every shade of feeling or passion, whether of archness or anger, hope or fear, follows each other in rapid succession, yet reflecting the image of each with all the softness of shade and distinctness of coloring of the summer stream which reflects the clouds, the skies, and the foliage about it. Other characters which she now impersonated for the first

time in New Orleans were Lydia Languish, Mrs. Simpson, Elizabeth Freelove (*A Day after the Wedding*), Bizarre (*Wine Does Wonders*) and Thérèse. For her benefit on April 11 she was Viola in the local première of *Twelfth Night* and Miss Arlington in *The Hundred Pound Note*. The *Louisiana Courier* of the 12th reported that the house had been "filled almost to suffocation," but the performances were "no more than respectable."

The last week in March was a busy one at the American Theatre. On the 24th came the world première of Captain Stephen Glover's new play, *Rake Hellies*. Only a "thin house" witnessed this dramatization of Cooper's *Lionel Lincoln*, but it is gratifying to read in the *Louisiana Courier* of March 25 that these few "seemed pre-disposed to be pleased with it, as every American audience should, with every American play on its first production." Two nights later the play was repeated as the afterpiece on a bill which featured the theatrical début of a young gentleman of the city. This gentleman won no praise for his performance as Zanga in *The Revenge*, and when he essayed Jaffier (*Venice Preserved*) on the 31st, he failed miserably. Those who witnessed his second attempt may have derived some entertainment from a new afterpiece, *Pop! Sparrow Shooting*, introduced on this evening.

The most ambitious spectacle of the season was J. R. Planché's melodrama, *The Brigand*, presented on April 5. Caldwell and Jane Placide enacted the leads amid scenery which had been four months in preparation, yet the play was not the success

the management had anticipated. A third representation, with the added attraction of G. H. Rodwell's new farce, *Teddy the Tiler*, was announced for the 13th, but the bill was postponed and the theatre closed until the 16th "in consequence of the indisposition of several of the performers and the great and continued inclemency of the weather."

The stars were again in possession when the theatre reopened. Kean and Fisher had been brought back for a joint engagement and Mr. and Mrs. Plumer were to fill the alternate nights with music. The youthful stars made their first appearance in *Romeo and Juliet* and were "eminently successful." Indeed, continued the *Louisiana Courier* of April 19, "The immortal bard himself would have joined . . . in the well merited plaudits that were rendered to his representatives, although they were applauded to the very echo." They also appeared as Durimel and Bertha (*The Point of Humor*), Sir Edward Mortimer and Wilford (*The Iron Chest*), Hamlet and Ophelia, Reuben Glenroy and Rosalie Somers (*Town and Country*), and as Carwin and Thérèse. On the last night of the engagement (April 29) Kean enacted the Duke Aranza to Clara Fisher's Juliana. Though many felt it a "hazardous experiment" for the young actor to try the role before an audience familiar with Caldwell's personation of it, he succeeded admirably.

The *Louisiana Courier* of April 30 throws some light on the performance.

The only fault that could be found with him (Kean) was, that he allowed his gravity to be overcome by the mock-gravity of Mr. Cowell, as the would-be duke; but the outraged Juliana was also obliged to resign her fury for a moment, while a hearty laugh illuminated her previously vengeful countenance—a strong proof of the irresistible drollery of that genuine Son of Momus.

The Plumers must not be overlooked. Their opening performance of *Rencontre* and *The Poor Soldier*, on April 19, was followed by the usual round of operas and musical pieces. Of these *The Barber of Seville*, *No Song, No Supper*, *Henri Quatre*, and *Paul and Virginia* had not been numbered among the offerings of the earlier engagement. Two novelties gave variety to an otherwise familiar repertoire. On April 26 the vocalists introduced *The Beggar's Opera* by John Gay. For Gray's benefit on the 30th they offered Dimond's operatic melodrama, *The Peasant*

Boy, "first time in New Orleans." Previous to her performance as Julian the peasant boy, Mrs. Plumer enacted Cicely Homespun in *The Heir at Law*.

The closing weeks of the season brought more benefits. On May 2 for the sake of the Orphan Boys, Kean and Clara Fisher reappeared in *Romeo and Juliet* and the Plumers gave *Winning a Husband*. The *Louisiana Courier* of the 4th says the receipts amounted to \$1,200. For her night (May 6) Mrs. Cowell offered *Perfection* with Clara Fisher as Kate O'Brien and two novelties, Buckstone's comedy, *The Happiest Day of My Life*, and *Rap Van Winkle*, possibly the adaptation by John Kerr. One cannot help wishing for a more illuminating comment than that in the *Louisiana Courier* of the 7th: "The play did not seem to answer the high expectations that had been created in its favor by its success at New York."

The most varied of the benefits was Mondelli's on the 7th. The ever popular *Rob Roy* was followed by Hernizen's comic song, "The Fashions of New Orleans," Madame Edouard's French Dancing, the exhibition of an entire new scene representing New York, and the opera of *Rosina*. But this was not all; in the lull before the afterpiece a Mr. Cops exhibited his beautiful serpents, the anaconda and the boa constrictor!

Mrs. Carr's benefit on May 13 introduced Mr. and Mrs. Pearman in the operatic *John of Paris* and *Brother and Sister*. Now that the Pearmans had arrived, as early as January 18 the *Louisiana Courier* had stated that they were expected daily, they added their songs to those of the Plumers. They were Figaro and the Countess Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* and in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Henry Bertram and Julia Mannering in *Guy Mannering*, and Mr. Scamper and Caroline in the farce, *The Effect of Endorsing*. A repetition of *John of Paris*, on their benefit night, presented Pearman in the name part, Plumer as Vincent, Mrs. Plumer as Rose, and Mrs. Pearman as the Princess of Navarre. The *Louisiana Courier* of May 21 reports that on this occasion the Pearmans supplemented the orchestra with "several amateurs and professors . . . to the end that the delightful melody of their own voices may suffer no abatement, by being intercepted by the villanous 'discord of sweet sounds' that are wont to issue from that department."

F. F. Cooper's burletta, *The Elbow Shakers*, was introduced on May 19 and in order that it might be properly appreciated *The Gambler's Fate*, which it parodied, preceded it on the bill. On their night (May 24) Field and Hernizen called in Mr. Brown's "unrivalled troop of horses" to assist with *The Forty Thieves*. With the horses came Mrs. Sergeant (Zelie), Wells (Selim), and Keyl (Ganem), three equestrians connected with Brown's amphitheatre. The bill concluded with *The Tragedians, or Business and Pleasure*, a new petite comedy written by Mr. Rawlinson, "a gentleman of this city." Nothing is known of the play beyond the mention of the cast in the notice of the performance.

A tragedy, *The Bohemian Mother*, and Soane's melodrama, *Aladdin*, were the novelties offered by Jane Placide on the 25th. First appearances marked the performance of *Speed the Plough* given by Raymond and Morton on their night, the 26th, Gerald being played by Charnock "from the Boston and New York theatre" and Dame Ashfield by Mrs. Higgins, who now returned after several years' absence. On the 30th Caldwell revived *The West Indian*, "first time this season," and introduced *The Highland Widow, or The Woman of the Tree*, a new drama taken from Scott's celebrated novel, *The Chronicles of Canongate*. This was apparently the work of a local playwright; no other dramatization of the tale is recorded until 1836 when Edinburgh saw it.<sup>34</sup>

With this performance the American Theatre ended another successful season. Whatever the evils of the starring system it seems to have brought full houses to Caldwell's theatre. Though records of his receipts are missing, the fact that he continued to bring forward "the first talent of the country" shows that the system was profitable for him. It should be noted also that the stars brought about a change in the tastes of the New Orleans audiences. The renewed interest in the legitimate drama this season may be attributed to the presentations of these visitors.

This June Caldwell took his company to Cincinnati for the summer season.<sup>35</sup> The St. Louis venture proving less successful than he had anticipated, Caldwell had decided it would be well to transfer his activities to another western city. Here the New Orleans company was to play for the next two summers while the Nashville theatre, which he had built in 1826, was leased to other managers.

<sup>34</sup> Nicoll, *op. cit.*, II, 468.

<sup>35</sup> Rees, *op. cit.*, 70; Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 381.

## THE AMERICAN THEATRE, 1831-1832

The American Theatre opened on November 23, 1831. It had been repainted during the vacation and the seats recovered. Doors had been placed at each side of the entrance that the cold, as well as the noise from the stairway, might be excluded from the boxes.

The company consisted of Caldwell, Jane Placide, Mr. and Mrs. Cowell, Mr. and Mrs. Gray, Mr. and Mrs. Carr, Mr. and Mrs. Higgins, Edward Raymond, Joseph Page, George Hernizen, Morton, Field, Charnock, Frederick, and Madame Edouard, the dancer. Raymond apparently left the troupe for Mobile sometime in March, for his name disappears from the bills at this time and the *Bee* of the 21st in noting his appearance in Mobile refers to him as "late of the Camp Street boards." The new members were Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Williams, last here in 1829, Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Muzzy, Messrs. Houpt and Madden, and Miss Eliza Petrie. Though there can be no question as to the excellence of this aggregation, Caldwell undoubtedly overestimated it when he declared that the company was not surpassed in any theatre of the United States.<sup>36</sup>

The opening performance of O'Keeffe's *Wild Oats* and the popular *No Song, No Supper* and the bills of the first few days served to introduce the new players and to display the strength of the company. The first novelty was Buckstone's *Popping the Question*, given as an afterpiece on the 29th; the next evening *Snakes in the Grass*, another of his recent farces, was presented as the curtain raiser. On December 3 came Douglas Jerrold's melodrama, *The Drunkard's Fate*.

The first visiting performer was John Herbert "from New York, Philadelphia, and Boston," an English actor who had made his American debut in 1817 as Sir Abel Handy in *Speed the Plough*. He opened on December 5 in this comedy and in *Animal Magnetism*. Afterwards he appeared as Governor Heartall, to the Widow Cheerly of Jane Placide, Sir David Dunder (*Ways and Means*), Sir Robert Bramble to the Emily Worthington of Miss Petrie (*The Poor Gentleman*), Job Thornberry (*John Bull*), Restive (*Turn Out*), Christopher Cosey (*Town and Country*), Brummagen (*Lock and Key*), and Bonus (*Laugh When You Can*). At his benefit on December 19 he was Sir Peter to the Lady Teazle

<sup>36</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, November 21, 1831.

of Mrs. Cowell. Young Cowell entertained between pieces with a new comic song and "Jim Crow," and G. W. P. Curtis's drama, *The Eighth of January*, concluded the bill.

On the 22nd Herbert began a second engagement during which he impersonated Sir Anthony Absolute (twice), Lazarillo (*The Hotel*), Sir Solomon Cynic (*The Will*), Sir Peter Teazle, Toby Allspice (*The Way to Get Married*), and Sir Adam Contest (*The Wedding Day*).

Meanwhile the visiting performers had been introduced. Carle Von Blisse, the Swiss minstrel, made the first of several appearances on November 28 when he sang "The Tyrolese Song of Liberty" in the true Tyrolese style, "introduced 600 years ago by the celebrated Professor and Composer Hirdwick." Millis, the American Fire King, was featured on December 6 and again on the 9th and the 14th. Promised the notices for these dates: "He will take a plate of Live Coals of Fire of which he will make a hearty supper, with as much *Sang Froid* as an epicure would swallow a bowl of Turtle Soup. He will also regale himself with a dish of Playing Balls, composed of Brimstone and Rosin." On the 13th came Peters, the Great Antipodean. He walked on the ceiling head downward, performed on the slack rope, and went through his Grecian Exercises during a three night engagement.

Melodramatic novelties now graced the bills. *The Courier of Naples*, *Will Watch*, or *The Black Phantom*, and *Melmouth*, or *The Horrors of the Inquisition* followed one another in rapid succession. A more important novelty was *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* introduced on December 28. This was the American première of the Shakespearian comedy, antedating by fifteen years the New York production which Joseph Ireland claimed as the first in this country.<sup>37</sup>

During the Chirstmas holidays Caldwell opened the theatre on Sundays that he might not lose the large receipts which were generally his on Christmas, New Year's, and the 8th of January. He presented traditional fare on these nights: *George Barnwell* and *The Gambler's Fate* on December 25, *She Would be a Soldier* on January 1, and *The Glory of Columbia* on January 8.

The curtain raiser on January 9 was Caroline Boaden's popular *William Thompson*. The 13th brought another new farce,

<sup>37</sup> *Record of the New York Stage from 1750 to 1860*, II, 466. Odell also gives October 6, 1846, as the date of the first New York performance. *Op. cit.*, V, 250.

Benjamin Webster's *High Ways and By Ways*, and on the 16th was staged Captain Stephen Glover's "new nautical play," *The Cradle of Liberty, or Boston in '75*. This play, like his *Rake Hellies* of the previous season, is based on Cooper's *Lionel Lincoln* and may have been a reworking of the earlier piece.

Henry J. Finn, the Boston comedian, began an engagement on January 19. He went through a round of characters familiar to the low comedians of his day: Bailie Nicol in *Rob Roy*, Billy Black in *The Hundred Pound Note*, Bean Shatterly in Poole's *Married and Single*, "never acted here," Dr. Lenitive in *The Prize*, Mawworm in *The Hypocrite*, Philip Garbois in *One Hundred and Two*, Sir Peter Teazle, Somno in *The Sleep Walker*, Billy Lackaday in *Sweethearts and Wives*, and Donald in *The Falls of Clyde*. On his benefit night, February 1, he enacted Lord Oglesby in Garrick's *Clandestine Marriage*, a comedy new to the city, and sang an original composition entitled "The New Orleans Firemen." He was immediately re-engaged and now came forward in several new roles: Dr. Pangloss (*The Heir at Law*), Bob Logic (*Tom and Jerry*), Tony Lumpkin, Paul Shack (*My Master's Rival*), Sir Edward Mortimer (*The Iron Chest*), Ephraim Smith (*Wild Oats*), Buskin (*Killing No Murder*), and Richard III.

William C. Forbes was featured on the "off nights" during the first part of Finn's engagement. He opened on January 24 as Sir Giles Overreach and on successive nights enacted Lieutenant Worthington to Finn's Dr. Ollapod (*The Poor Gentleman*), Macbeth, Damon, and Hamlet, the last for his benefit on February 4.

Forbes was succeeded by William Keppell, from the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, an actor who had recently acted at the Bowery in New York. His was a Shakespearian repertoire: *Richard III*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet* (twice), *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and Garrick's adaptation, *Catharine and Petruchio*. It would be interesting to know what the New Orleans critics thought of this actor, for it was he who played Fazio to the Bianca of Fanny Kemble on her American debut the following September and nearly ruined the performance. Said Miss Kemble of him: "The poor man is under strong mental delusion; he cannot act in the least."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> For an account of Keppell and the Kembles see Odell, *op. cit.*, III, 605-607.

The next star was Master Joseph Burke, the youngest and the most popular of the visiting performers this season. On his opening night, February 24, he portrayed Young Norval in *Douglas* and Terry O'Rourke in *The Irish Tutor* and between the plays led the orchestra in the overture to *Guy Mannering*. The next night he was Sir Abel Handy (*Speed the Plough*) and Looney Mactwolter (*The Review*). After his performance in *The Merchant of Venice* (Shylock) and *Whirligig Hall*, the *Louisiana Advertiser* (February 28) reported that the people of New Orleans were bewitched by his enchantments." On each night of the engagement Master Burke acted in both the play and the afterpiece. By March 10 he had appeared as Doctor Pangloss (*The Heir at Law*), Richard III, Murtock Delany (*Irishman in London*), Dr. Ollapod (*The Poor Gentleman*), My Lord Duke (*High Life Below Stairs*), Romeo, Lingo (*An Agreeable Surprise*), Dennis Brulgruddery (*John Bull*), Master Socrates Chameleon (*The March of Intellect*, a new afterpiece), Tristram Fickle (*The Weathercock*), Major O'Flaherty (*The West Indian*), Paul Pry, Hamlet, and Patrick (*The Poor Soldier*). The notice of *The Death's Head, or The Disguise*, "a new farce never acted here," does not tell which was his role.

The young star began a second engagement on March 12 with *The Prize* and *Young Napoleon, Duke of Reichstadt*, announced as a new drama "never acted in any theatre." In addition to repetitions of earlier roles he now appeared as General Bombastes, Crack (*The Turnpike Gate*), Cornelius O'Dedimus (*Man and Wife*), and Jobson (*The Devil to Pay*). The twentieth and last appearance on March 17 presented him as Barney Bralaghan in the farce of that name.

James H. Hackett, the American comedian, came out on March 19 as Nimrod Wildfire in J. A. Stone's alteration of Paulding's play, *The Lion of the West*. On the 21st he offered his adaptation of Colman's *Who Wants a Guinea?* entitled *Jonathan in England*; the next night he appeared in *Rip Van Winkle*, in *Down East*, and in the farce, *Monsieur Tonson*. In the interlude, *Sylvester Daggerwood*, on the 23rd, he gave imitations of Kean, Macready, Hilson, and Barnes; on the 24th, he impersonated Industrious Doolittle, "a busy talkative speculating Yankee," in *The Times, or Travels in America*. For his benefit on March 26, *Rip Van Winkle*, *Down East*, and *The Lion of the West* were repeated "in compliance with the wishes of various applications."

Thomas Cooper began an engagement of eight nights on March 28. Opening as Virginius, to the Appius Claudius of Houpt, "his first appearance in New Orleans," Cooper went through a familiar round of characters until his benefit on April 9. On that occasion he offered a "detached portion" of *The School for Scandal*, appearing himself in the role of Sir Peter.

George Holland was also filling an engagement during this time. His *Whims of a Comedian* followed Cooper's Hamlet on March 30, and for the remainder of his stay he and the tragedian generally performed on the same evening. On April 3 he played Valianto in Edward Fitzball's *Joan of Arc*, a popular melodrama which had been introduced earlier in the season. He appeared in one other new role when, on April 11, he acted Peter Pickwell in the first American showing of R. J. Raymond's farce, *P. S. Come to Dinner*.

Master Burke returned the day after Holland's benefit and in rapid succession repeated ten of his most popular roles. April 16 brought a new role, Sir Callaghan O'Brallaghan in *Love à la Mode*, and several novel features. Among other musical feats, he composed an extempore overture on the stage, "giving the parts to each instrument *with his voice* and enabling the orchestra to perform a perfect Overture without Books!" With Burke's farewell benefit on the 17th the theatre closed for the Easter recess. •

The theatre reopened on April 23 with two novelties, Moncrieff's comedy, *Rochester, or King Charles' Merry Days*, and Buckstone's operetta, *33 John Street*. A new melodrama entitled *Charles the Terrible* was presented on the 26th and on the following night came Caroline Boaden's farce, *The First of April*.

Barton, the last of the visiting performers, began an engagement on April 25 as Lear to the Cordelia of Mrs. Rowe. On his second appearance he offered *Macbeth*, Jane Placide playing opposite him. Other parts were Zanga in *The Revenge*, Virginius, Werner in the play of that name which Macready had adapted from Byron's poem, Rolla in *Pizarro*, and for his benefit on May 12, Jaffier, Petruchio, and Paris in a sketch from Massinger's *The Roman Actor*. He volunteered his services at several of the company benefits. He repeated Lear on Mrs. Rowe's night and for Jane Placide he appeared as Carwin and Lord Townly to her

Thérèse and Lady Townly (*The Provoked Husband*). At Mrs. Carr's benefit on the 16th he and Mrs. Rowe were Doricourt and Letitia Hardy.

Only Caldwell and Old Gray presented novelties during this benefit season. The comedian offered Frederick Reynold's *Management* and Buckstone's farce, *Mischief Making*. For his benefit on the 19th Caldwell advertised C. A. Somerset's *Maurice the Wood Cutter*. With this performance the theatre closed for the summer, and soon after Caldwell and the company left for Cincinnati.

AMERICAN THEATRE, 1832-1833

The season which opened on November 21, 1832, was Caldwell's last as manager of the American Theatre and one of the most brilliant he ever presented. The company was stronger than that of the previous year, including among the recent recruits James Thorne, a singing actor from the Park Theatre in New York, James M. Scott, J. M. Field, late of the Richmond Hill Theatre, New York, and John Gilbert, who returned after an absence of several years. Other new members were Mrs. Ludlow, Miss Coleman, "from the Philadelphia and New York Theatres," Schoolcraft, Coney, Lyne, Auguste, Brown, Powell, Gaskill, Eversull, Johnson, Richings, and Mesdames Caines and Roberts. The return of Richard Russell and his family compensated for the loss of the Cowells, and Hugh Reinagle, formerly scene painter at the Park, replaced Mondelli. In the opinion of Manager Caldwell his was the "best regular stock company in the union."

The bill of the opening night served to reintroduce Mr. and Mrs. Russell as Widow Cheerly and Timothy Quaint in *The Soldier's Daughter* and to present Jane Placide as the heroine in Buckstone's new drama, *Victoire, or The Orphan of Paris*. The next night Barton began an engagement as William Tell, Master Russell appearing as Albert. James M. Scott made his bow on the 23rd as Bertram in *The Foundling of the Forest*, and as Michael in *The Adopted Child*, and on the 24th was Pierre to the Jaffier of Barton. On this evening James Thorne was introduced as Looney Mactwolter in *The Review*.

Thomas Hilson came out on the 26th as Robert Tyke and Somno, and on the 28th Mrs. Hilson made her New Orleans début as Lady Teazle and Clari, the Maid of Milan, to the Sir Peter and

Rolamo of her husband. *Isabella* on the 27th had introduced Mrs. Mary Duff, a star of even greater magnitude than the Hilsons, and for the next few weeks the scene was dominated by the visitors. Mr. and Mrs. Hilson appeared together as Paul Pry and Harry Stanly; Martin and Rachael Heywood in *The Rent Day*, Jerrold's new domestic drama; Adam Brock and Eudiga in *Charles XII*; Captain Bertram and Charlotte in Dunlap's comedy, *Fraternal Discord*; Dogberry and Beatrice; and Sir John Falstaff and Mrs. Page, the last being for Hilson's benefit on December 19. Mrs. Hilson was seen as Mary in *The Innkeeper's Daughter*, Russell taking the part of Richard; as Francis De Foix in the Fanny Kemble tragedy, *Francis the First of France*, "first time in America"; and as Mrs. Banter in *Ladies! Do Not Stay at Home*. Hilson appeared in *Sprigs of Laurel*, *Paul the Poacher*, *Tis All a Farce*, *The Happiest Day of My Life*, *John Bull*, and *The Agreeable Surprise*.

Barton and Mrs. Duff played on alternate nights, appearing as the Stranger and Mrs. Haller, Beverly and Mrs. Beverly, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Lord Hastings and Jane Shore, Rolla and Elvira, and for Barton's benefit on December 15, as Lear and Cordelia. James M. Scott played opposite Mrs. Duff in *Adelgitha*, *The Robber's Wife*, *The Apostate*, *Bertram*, *The Bohemian Mother*, *Evadne*, *Adrian and Orilla*, and *Thérèse*.

As Mrs. Duff prepared to leave, Mrs. Knight, a favorite of five seasons ago, began an engagement. She opened on December 28 as Miss Hardcastle and Victoire (*The Invincibles*), following it on the 31st with Marianne in *The Dramatist*, and a repetition of *The Invincibles*, "by desire." Her engagement was interrupted on January 1 to allow for the New Orleans première of Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz's *Lamora! or The Western Wild*, a play which did not prove so successful as the native pieces of recent years. The popular George Holland made his bow on this evening in the burletta, *The Day After the Fair*. He remained through the 26th, repeating roles in which he had appeared on previous visits.

On January 2, 1833, Mrs. Knight sang Susannah in *The Barber of Seville*, assisted by the Figaro of Thorne, the Count Almaviva of Field, and the Countess Almaviva of Mrs. Rowe; in the afterpiece she was Kate O'Brien. Her other parts were Diana Vernon in *Guy Mannering*, Rosina, Ophelia, and Pauline in

Auber's opera, *The National Guard*. Her benefit on January 11 presented her as Rosalie Somers and as Fanny Bolton in the local première of O'Keeffe's musical burletta, *The Grenadier*.

Two other visitors of early January were Monsieur Gouffe, the celebrated "Man Monkey," and Fletcher, "the Venetian Statue." On the 3rd, Gouffe made his bow in *Jocko, the Brazilian Ape*, and Fletcher exhibited his statues; thereafter, they appeared together in the pantomimes *Jack Robinson and his Monkey*, *Pitcairn's Island*, and *La Perouse*. On their benefit night, January 24, Fletcher presented twenty-eight models of ancient statuary and Madame Gouffe made her American début as Myssa to her husband's Jocko.

W. C. Forbes opened as Hamlet on January 7 and continued as Sir Edward Mortimer and Virginius, sharing the stage on these nights with Messrs. Gouffe and Fletcher. On the 15th he played the title role in *Eugene Aram*, a dramatization of Bulwer's novel said to have been made by Caldwell.<sup>30</sup> Mrs. Knight began a second engagement on January 17 with the local première of Pocock's opera, *Sweet Home! or The Rans des Vaches*, and *The Turn Out*. On the 19th the cast of *The Merchant of Venice* enlisted Forbes as Shylock, Jane Placide as Portia, Holland as Launcelot Gobbo, and Mrs. Knight as Jessica. The bill for the 21st included *Thérèse*, Forbes enacting Carwin, *Paul and Virginia*, with Mrs. Knight in the role of Virginia, and *Jack Robinson and His Monkey*. On the 23rd, *Guy Mannering*, with Mrs. Knight as Julia and Holland as Domine Sampson preceded William Diamond's, *Abon Hassan*. This novelty was repeated for Holland's benefit on the 26th with J. T. Haines' *The Idiot Witness, or a Tale of Blood*, and *Ramfylde Moore Caren*, a new Christmas Harlequinade featuring dancing, "curious tricks," mechanical changes, and a splendid display of fireworks.

Meantime the Hilsons had returned, and on the 28th Sheridan Knowles' new play, *The Hunchback*, was presented with Hilson as Master Walter, Forbes as Sir Thomas Clifford, Jane Placide as Julia, and Mrs. Hilson as Helen. Mrs. Duff had also been re-engaged and she and Forbes appeared as Albert Germaine and Julia on the 29th; the next evening she was Mary to Scott's Will Watch, the opening pieces on both of these occasions being *The Hunchback*.

<sup>30</sup> Rees, *op. cit.*, 42.

Caldwell now engaged the stud of horses from Brown's circus and turned to equestrian drama. *Timour the Tartar* was given on February 1 with Scott replacing Caldwell as Timour and Master Russell as Agib, a role once taken by his sister. Forbes made his last appearance on the 6th as Iago to Barton's Othello, Mrs. Hilson's Desdemona, and Mrs. Duff's Emilia. On the 11th, Jane Placide, having "availed herself of the last day of the Hilsons' stay in New Orleans," offered *The Hunchback*. This was followed by *Blue Beard* with Miss Petrie, Scott, and the horses. In the farce, *The Lady and the Devil*, on the 12th, Miss Coleman made her first appearance as Zephyrina. The next night she played the Countess Wintersen to the Stranger of Caldwell and the Mrs. Haller of Mrs. Duff. What was destined to be one of the most popular of equestrian pieces had its American première on the 13th, *Mazeppa, or The Wild Horse*, with Field in the title role and Mrs. Rowe as Olinska. For his benefit on the 15th Brown offered a variety of entertainment which included exhibitions on the *cord volante*, Chinese Juggling, *The Lady of the Lake*, with an original scene by the equestrian corps, and *Timour the Tartar*. In these Charles Webb made "his first and only appearance in New Orleans," as Rhoderic Dhu and Timour.

The most ambitious of this season's spectacles was Rophino Lacy's *Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper*, brought out on February 18. The spectacle won immediate favor and was repeated on six successive evenings. Commented the *Bee* of February 27:

Scarcely ever has so much igenuity and splendor been exhibited on the stage in this city in machinery and decorations. . . . The singing is not entitled to as much praise but that it should be first rate cannot be expected since the company was not selected for operatic pieces, and besides it is not to be forgotten that the pieces are such as offer great obstacles to the first singers of Europe. The choruses are well sung generally. Messrs. Caldwell and Thorne are entitled to the first rank as musicians in their company.

The piece was interrupted on February 26 so that Mrs. Duff, "having recovered from her late severe indisposition," and Master Russell might enact Lady Randolph and Young Norval in a performance of *Douglas* which had been postponed from the 16th. On March 4 the spectacle made way for a novelty, *Washington at Valley Forge*, "by two gentlemen of New Orleans." James Rees claims the play as his, and it is possible he was the chief

collaborator; however, the announcement of the fourth performance on March 16 reads, "for the benefit of the authors." *The Hunchback* was now revived with a cast which included Caldwell as Sir Thomas Clifford, Scott as Master Walter, and Mrs. Rowe as Helen. When the play was performed for the seventh time on March 8, it preceded Shannon's new farce, *My Wife or My Place*. A less successful farce was C. A. Somerset's *Shakespeare's Early Days*, given as the curtain raiser on the 11th.

James W. Wallack made his New Orleans début on March 18 as Rolla in *Pizarro* and as Dick Dashall in *My Aunt*. The bill was repeated on the 20th when Jane Placide, "having recovered from her indisposition," replaced Mrs. Rowe as Elvira. The star continued as Don Felix in *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret*, Michael in *The Adopted Child*, Hamlet, Martin Heywood, "as originally played by him," Rattle in the farce *Spring and Autumn*, Richard III, Allesandro in *The Brigand*, Walter in *The Children in the Wood*, and Bob Honeycomb in T. E. Wilks' new farce, *The Wolf and the Lamb*. Among the roles which he offered for his benefit on April 1 was that of Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Mrs. Knight returned on the 2nd as Cinderella. Her next offering, *Abon Hassan*, preceded Thomas Dibdin's *The Heart of Midlothian*, which, advertised for March 15, had been withdrawn in consequence of Jane Placide's illness. On the 5th the star was Ariel in the Davenant-Dryden version of *The Tempest*, "first time in New Orleans." Wallack began a second engagement on the 8th, succeeding Scott as Master Walter in *The Hunchback*. He now came out as Macbeth, as Don Vincent D'Almanza in Rodwell's new comedy, *My Own Lover*, and with Mrs. Knight he appeared in *The Mountaineers* (Octavian and Agnes) and in *The Honeymoon* (Duke Aranza and Juliana). His benefit and last appearance before his departure for Europe presented him as Mike Mainsail, "first time", in Captain Glover's *Cradle of Liberty*, Captain Glover himself enacting Captain Noodle for the "first time."

After Wallack left, the management brought out the second elaborate spectacle of the season, *The Flying Dutchman or The Phantom Ship* by Edward Fitzball. More interesting to the historian of the American drama is the novelty which came on the 29th, Captain Glover's new national play, *The Banished Provin-*

*cial or Olden Times*. According to a preliminary notice in the *Bee* of April 15, the play contained some excellent hits at foreign travellers such as Basil Hall.

The benefit of comedian Hernizen on April 30 should be noted. He promised to exhibit "the great natural curiosity, the Ourang Outang," and to conclude the entertainment by appearing as Richard III in the fifth act of the play.

Edwin Forrest began an engagement of seven nights on May 1. With him was Andrew Jackson Allen who played Kane-shine in the performance of J. A. Stone's prize tragedy, *Metamora*, on the opening night and impersonated the Doctor in *Animal Magnetism*, the afterpiece on the 2nd. The star continued in *Damon and Pythias*, *The Gladiator* of Robert Montgomery Bird, *William Tell*, and *Virginius*. The engagement was extended an extra night in order to comply with the general wish that he appear in *Othello*, and on the 15th he volunteered his services for Mrs. Russell's benefit, enacting Brutus to her Tarquinia in Payne's play. During this visit Mrs. Russell had been called on to support him in many of his roles as Jane Placide had sailed for Liverpool soon after his arrival.<sup>40</sup>

Two benefits of early May produced interesting novelties. On May 7 J. M. Field presented acts from the popular *Washington at Valley Forge* and introduced Jerrold's *John Overy* and his own satirical farce, *Tourists in America*. As this sketch was received "with shouts of approbation" Mrs. Ludlow offered it as the concluding piece on her night. On this occasion Ludlow made his only appearance of the season, as Sharp in *The Lying Valet*. He relates in his *Dramatic Life* that he had left the theatrical profession this winter and engaged in business with a cousin in New Orleans.<sup>41</sup>

Madame Brichta, the celebrated Prima Donna of the Italian Opera in New York, arrived from Havana on May 10 and was immediately engaged. She made her début as Cinderella, singing in addition to the original music an Italian Bravura. She was Rosina on May 16, with Thorne as Figaro and Field as Count Almaviva; and for her benefit on the 18th she appeared in *The Lottery Ticket* and *The Prize*.

The celebrated acrobats, the Ravels, were introduced on May 17. For six nights this family delighted with their tightrope

<sup>40</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, May 8, 1838.

<sup>41</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 483.

walking, herculean feats, pantomine ballets, and *tableaux vivants*. On these evenings the resident company offered a farce or light comedy.

Page and Field took a joint benefit on May 24 since inclement weather had kept Field's first night from being productive. The entertainments offered on this night were *The Pilot*, Field's new farce, *Coming Out*, and a Grand Masquerade in which the members of the company were "to mingle in the scene and support a variety of favorite characters." Tickets to the boxes with the privilege of the stage and use of dress were listed at \$2.00; the price of admission to the boxes only remained the same.

The season ended on May 28 with Caldwell's benefit. For his last appearance as manager of the American Theatre he selected his favorite character, Belcour in *The West Indian*. George Holland made his appearance after the comedy, singing a comic song, and the entertainment concluded with tightrope walking and a new pantomime ballet by the Ravel Family.

There is little that needs to be added to what the records show of Caldwell's activities as manager of the American Theatre on Camp Street. His companies during many of these ten years were among the most competent in the United States, and each season he brought to New Orleans whatever stars he could engage. The repertoires with their generous sprinkling of novelties show him to have been untiring in his efforts to gratify the wishes and tastes of the public. Under his management the English theatre at New Orleans had become firmly established.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SEASONS OF 1833-34 AND 1834-35

#### AMERICAN THEATRE, 1833-1834

The American Theatre opened on November 27, 1833, for its first season under the management of Richard Russell and James S. Rowe. By the terms of the contract with Caldwell, the new managers leased the theatre in New Orleans, the New Cincinnati Theatre, and the New Nashville Theatre, for a five-year period at \$12,000 a year. They purchased outright, for \$5,000, the stock wardrobe, books, and music belonging to the American Theatre.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Notarial acts of Boswell, May 13, 1833, Court House, New Orleans.

Russell continued in his old position as stage manager and Rowe as treasurer. The announcements of the first few performances show that with the exception of James Caldwell, Jane Placide, and James M. Scott, the stock company had suffered no notable losses. Joseph M. Field, James Thorne, John Gilbert, Jackson Gray, George Hernizen, Mr. and Mrs. Russell, Master Russell, Mrs. Rowe, Miss Petrie, and Mrs. Higgins were again members of the company. Among the new performers, pronounced "excellent in their line," were H. G. Pearson and Mrs. Crooke, two favorites of past seasons, S. Pearson, T. Pearson, Waldron, Hunt, Simonds, (A. J.) Marks, Corri, Mrs. Salzman, and the dancers, Mr. and Mrs. Gay. Early in March, Thomas Hilson, Spencer, "from the New York, Philadelphia and Boston Theatres," and Rice, "from the Tremont," joined the company. James Scott returned at this time and remained until the end of the season.

Managers Russell and Rowe were proud of their company and of the visiting performers whom they had engaged, and when a critic denounced the theatre, they replied in the *Louisiana Advertiser* of January 24:

Now, if the public will pardon our boasting, we pronounce our stock company equal to any in the United States, and on this we offer a bet of \$500. We also offer the editor, or author of the article under the editorial head of the *Courier* of the 22nd inst. in relation to the American Theatre, a further bet of \$1,000 that he cannot name any theatre since the drama has been known in the United States that has even produced the same amalgamation of talent, called Stars, as is now in this city.

The opening performance on November 27 presented Mrs. Knight, the first of the season's many stars. She went through a familiar round of characters: Letitia Hardy, Clari, Kate O'Brien, Miss Hardcastel, Margueretta in *No Song, No Supper*, Miss Dorillon, Widow Cheerly, and Julima in *Abon Hassam*. In many of these she played opposite J. M. Field who had succeeded Caldwell in the high comedy leads. On her benefit night, December 3, she appeared in *The Marriage of Figaro* as Susannah to Thorne's Figaro and as Ariel in *The Tempest*.

Clara Fisher opened an engagement on December 5 in *The School for Scandal* and *The Actress of All Work*. She introduced nothing new during this first engagement, appearing as Juliana

in *The Honey Moon*, Little Pickle, Albina Mandeville in *The Will*, Priscilla Tomboy in *The Romp*, Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Beatrice, to the Benedick of H. G. Pearson, Letitia Hardy, Donna Violante in *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret*, and other roles equally as familiar.

A third star emerged before Clara Fisher took her benefit. This was "Gentleman George" Barrett, the light comedian, who began his engagement on December 10 in *The Dramatist* (Vapid) and in *Raising the Wind* (Jeremy Diddler). Mrs. Barrett joined him on his second night when the two enacted Sir Thomas Clifford and Julia in *The Hunchback* and introduced J. R. Planché's new farce, *The Dumb Belle*. Among their next offerings were several other novelties: Sheridan Knowles, latest tragedy, *The Wife*; S. J. Arnold's farce, *Free and Easy*; and M. R. Lacy's adaptation from Scribe, *The Two Friends*. They also appeared as Corinthian Tom and Kate in *Tom and Jerry*, as Charles Paragon and Kate O'Brien in *Perfection*, and on their last night, December 28, as Charles Surface and Lady Teazle, Barrett also playing Narcissus Stubble in the afterpiece, *High Ways and By Ways*.

The new managers were taking no chances this first season. The Barretts had hardly begun their engagement when another star was brought out. This was the tenor, John Sinclair, who made his début on December 16 as Henry Bertram; Mrs. Knight, who had been re-engaged to assist him, enacted Julia Mannering. On alternate nights to the Barretts the vocalists were Prince Orlando and Floretta in *The Cabinet* and Frederick and Maria in William Murray's *No! or The Glorious Minority*, a musical farce not previously seen here. On the 20th Sinclair acted Francis Osbaldistone (*Rob Roy*), and in the afterpiece, *Is He Jealous?*, Clara Fisher reappeared as Harriett.

A union of the starry forces was inevitable. On the "glorious 23rd," Clara Fisher, Mrs. Knight, and Sinclair offered the local première of Dimond's comic opera, *Englishmen in India*. Following this came Bernard's new farce, *The Four Sisters*, with Clara Fisher in the multiple name part. On December 27 the triumvirate repeated *Englishmen in India* and appeared in the operatic *Rosina*, Clara Fisher in the role of Phoebe. As their engagement drew to a close, the vocalists appeared together in *Love in a*

*Village*, Sinclair concluding the bill as Apollo in Kane O'Hara's burletta, *Midas*. Mrs. Knight continued in oft repeated roles while Clara Fisher was featured in the afterpiece.

George Barrett joined the stars on January 2, 1834, re-appearing as Pedro to Mrs. Knight's Cinderella and Sinclair's Prince. This popular spectacle, "with new and splendid scenery" by Reinagle, was repeated for Mrs. Knight's benefit on January 10 and for Barrett's on the 17th. During the second engagement Barrett supported Mrs. Knight in *She Stoops to Conquer* and played opposite Clara Fisher as Young Mirabel in *Wine Does Wonders*, as Mr. Belmour in *Is He Jealous?*, and as Charles Paragon. In *The Hunchback*, on January 11, he played Sir Thomas Clifford to the Julia of Jane Placide and the Helen of Mrs. Russell.

The performance of Jane Placide, the first since her return from Europe, brought forth the following comment from the *Louisiana Advertiser* of January 15:

Her trip . . . has been of service to Miss Placide. Her personal appearance is improved and her style of acting, we think, chastened. It has always been conceded that but few actresses were superior to Miss Placide in portraying the stronger passions, but in Julia, in the critical scene with the secretary, she drew tears from those who are not wont to shed tears freely.

On January 13 came Mrs. Austin, the most celebrated of the season's vocalists. Her opening role as Ariel was followed by Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*, Countess Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Margaretta in *No Song, No Supper*. Sinclair returned on the 20th to appear as the Prince to her Cinderella.

George Handel Hill, the delineator of Yankee character, made his bow on the 21st, and for the next two weeks he and the vocalists performed on alternate nights. On the evening that he opened as Solomon Swap in *Jonathan in England*, Jane Placide made her second appearance in Jerrold's *The Housekeeper, or The White Rose*, a comedy which had never been acted in the United States. The 25th brought Hill as the Yankee servant Jedediah Homebred in J. S. Jones' play, *The Green Mountain Boy*, and Jane Placide in *Thérèse*. Except for his personation of Mawworm in *The Hypocrite*, Hill appeared only in those plays

which featured the Yankee type. He was Joshua Horsereddish in *East and West*, Jonathan Ploughboy in Samuel Woodworth's *Forest Rose*, and Zachariah Dickerwell in Woodworth's *Foundling of the Sea*. As Jonathan Ploughboy he delivered his favorite Yankee story, "Jonathan's Visit to the Genessee Country" and sang "A Hit at the Fashions."

There were few starless nights this winter. On January 27 the management announced that new engagements had been concluded with Mrs. Austen, Clara Fisher, and Sinclair. They made their re-entry in *The Beggar's Opera*, Mrs. Austen as Polly, Sinclair as Captain MacHeath, and Clara Fisher as Lucy. On January 29 Mrs. Austen and Sinclair were paired as Henry Bertram and Julia Mannering and as Belville and Rosina. *Cinderella*, *Rob Roy*, and *John of Paris* with Clara Fisher as Vincent take us to Sinclair's benefit on February 10. On this occasion *Masaniello* presented him in the title role assisted by Mrs. Austen as the Princess and Clara Fisher as Fenella. He was re-engaged immediately, and the play was given nightly until Mrs. Austen's benefit on the 14th when she was Annette and Sinclair, Truemore in *The Lord of the Manor*.

James Caldwell began an engagement on February 17 in *Laugh When You Can* and *Of Age To-morrow*. Clara Fisher, who now returned to play opposite him, was Juliana to his Duke Aranza and Jane Placide's Volante in *The Honey Moon*, Lady Teazle to his Charles Surface, Kate O'Brien to his Charles Paragon, and Ophelia to his Hamlet. Meanwhile several novelties had been brought out. The 22nd witnessed the staging of *Washington, or The Retaliation*, a new play by "a gentleman of this city," John Dumont.<sup>2</sup> On the 24th came Dr. Arne's opera, *Artaxerxes*, and on the 27th, for Jane Placide's benefit, Buckstone's domestic drama, *The Wreck Ashore*, "first time in America."

After the departure of Mrs. Austen and Clara Fisher early in March the interest centered in the new members of the company. On the 7th Thomas Hilson made his bow as Paul Pry, and the afterpiece reintroduced James M. Scott in a favorite role, that of Long Tom Coffin. Charles Hodges and Miss Nelson, whom Caldwell had engaged in England the previous summer, came out at this time, he as Count Belino in *The Devil's Bridge* and she as Rosalind in *As You Like It*. Mrs. Knight returned on March

<sup>2</sup> *Bee*, May 14, 1835.

14 and with the aid of Hilson, Scott, Mrs. Rowe, and Sinclair, who seem to have been always near this season, the managers produced Cobb's operatic *Siege of Belgrade*. Mrs. Knight and Sinclair appeared frequently during the next six weeks, but of their presentations only Lacy's *Fra Diavolo* was new.

The middle of March brought Edwin Forrest and the Barretts. Mrs. Barrett had been re-engaged to play opposite the tragedian and her husband to appear in the afterpieces or wherever he was needed. Forrest opened on March 19 in *The Gladiator* and for the most part continued in familiar roles. His repertoire included only two new plays, *The Broker of Bogota* and *Oralloossa, the Last of the Incas*, both written for him by Robert Montgomery Bird.

An important event of the spring was the "Grand Dramatic Festival" given on April 14 for the benefit of Thomas Cooper and his children. Cooper had always been a favorite in New Orleans and now that he was in need, his friends planned a benefit such as had been tendered him in New York earlier in the year. Admission to the parquet and dress circle was fixed at three dollars, the second and third tier of boxes at two, and the gallery at one. The stars who were in New Orleans at the time volunteered their services. After the opening piece, *The Blue Devils*, with Hilson as Megrim and Mrs. Russell as Annette, Mrs. Barrett delivered a poetic address written "by a gentleman of this city." Then came the third act of *Othello* with Cooper in the name part, Forrest as Iago, and Mrs. Rowe as Desdemona. This was followed by *The Hunter of the Alps* in which Caldwell played Felix and Andrew Jackson Allen, Jeronymo. There were songs by Mrs. Knight, Mrs. Austen, and Sinclair and the fourth act of *Virginus* presented by Cooper and his daughter. The entertainment concluded with *The Dumb Belle*, Mr. and Mrs. Barrett in the leading roles.

Cooper was now engaged to play with Forrest and the two appeared on the 18th as Damon and Pythias. Successively Forrest enacted *Othello* to Cooper's Iago, Marc Antony to his Cassius, and Jaffier to his Pierre. At Forrest's benefit on the 23rd Cooper and Mrs. Russell enacted *Catharine and Petruchio*, and for the veteran star's benefit the next night, Forrest and Mrs. Rowe offered *Thérèse*. As he was still in the city on the night of Mrs. Russell's benefit, April 26, Forrest played Brutus to her Tarquinia in Payne's tragedy.

After Forrest's departure musical entertainment again dominated. Mrs. Austen now appeared as Julia Mannering to Hodges' Henry Bertram and Mrs. Knight's Lucy. She enacted the Prince in *Masaniello*, Zerlina in *Fra Diavolo*, and Alfred in the new operetta, *Music and Prejudice*. In *The Beggar's Opera* she was Polly, Hodges, Macheath, and Miss Nelson, Lucy. The performance was not favorably reviewed in the *Bee* of May 12. Hodges was said to be the only one of the characters who was perfect in his part. "As for Mrs. Austen," commented the critic, "as usual she charmed us with her voice but as to the part of Polly she had no idea of it." On the 9th of May this singer concluded her engagement in the local première of Boieldieu's opera, *The Caliph of Bagdad*; however, she remained until the end of the season assisting on benefit nights.

The benefit season brought new plays. The farce on Old Gray's night was *The Miniature*, the authorship of which is claimed by James Rees. On his night Field essayed Hamlet "for the first time (by desire)" and impersonated Sylvester Daggerwood. Hilson's benefit presented him as Master Walter (*The Hunchback*) and Mrs. Hilson "having recovered from her recent indisposition" made her only appearance of the season as Helen. For Reinagle's benefit on May 17, James Rees dramatized Cooper's novel, *The Headsman*. The artist produced an entire new set of scenes for this and exhibited a new transparency of the Mazeppa horse between the play and the farce. Apparently the transparency awakened memories; *Mazeppa* was revived on the 20th with the aid of Brown's horses and ran for six nights.

With the performance of *The School of Reform* and *Mazeppa* on May 27, the season came to a close. The new managers had deviated little from the policy of their predecessor this season and had presented good dramatic entertainment.

AMERICAN THEATRE, 1834-1835

In November of 1834 Richard Russell and James S. Rowe returned to New Orleans for their second season as managers of the American Theatre. The newly appointed stage manager was James M. Scott; J. R. Smith was chief scenic artist; and Lefolle, leader of the orchestra. Among the old members of the company were Messrs. James Thorne, H. G. Pearson, Sidney Pearson, Hodges, Marks, Carr, Corri, and Fielding; Mesdames Russell, Rowe, Crooke, Carr, and Higgins; and Misses Petrie and Nelson.

Notable among the absentees were John Gilbert, Joseph M. Field, Jackson Gray, George Hernizen, and Thomas Hilson, who had died suddenly during the summer campaign. The new members included Messrs. George P. Farren, engaged to replace Gilbert, Williamson, a singing actor, Drummond, Philips, Judah, Stith, Fairchild, Walton, Keppel, Thomas Radcliffe, N. H. Bannister, Bristow, Delmon, Charles Muzzy, Hubbard, Brace, Manly and J. Warrell; and Mesdames Thomas Hilson, Hubbard, Muzzy, George Rowe, and Horne. Later in the season Mrs. Stone and Miss Rae were engaged.

The theatre opened on November 24 with an appropriate address written and delivered by N. H. Bannister. Then followed the opera, *Love in a Village*, and *The Young Widow*. The roles of Rosetta and young Meadows in the opera were to be played by Mrs. Knight and A. F. Keene, "his first appearance in thirteen years," but in a last minute change of cast Williamson was forced to enact the lead. In the continued absence of Keene who, according to the *Louisiana Advertiser* of November 28, was "still in lavender," Mrs. Knight turned to light comedy, appearing in *The Belle's Stratagem* and *As You Like It* opposite H. G. Pearson. On December 2 Keene made his bow as Henry Bertram to Mrs. Knight's Julia Mannering. Thereafter, until January 8 when they left for Natchez, the two vocalists appeared as young Meadows and Rosetta, Colonel Oswald and Gulnare in *Englishmen in India*. Jocosio and Clari, and Francis Osbaldistone and Diana Vernon (*Rob Roy*). Hodges enacted the Prince to Mrs. Knight's Cinderella on December 12, and on its repetition (December 19) Williamson succeeded to the role.

Apparently Keene was more popular than Mrs. Knight. The *Louisiana Advertiser* of December 1 said he was "perhaps the best singing actor in the country." This critic thought Mrs. Knight "too much addicted to the mechanical style of singing . . . and too frequently she does not appear to understand what she utters. When singing the mermaid song last week, she shouted 'follow me-ee-ee-ee' through several bars and flights till she exhausted her own strength and the patience of her hearers."

Mrs. Alexander Drake had begun an engagement on November 26 and until December 10 she and the vocalists played on alternate nights. Her personations of Bianca in *Fazio*, Julia in *The Hunchback*, Evadne, Adelgitha were well received. Cried

one enthusiastic critic, "Talk of Fanny Kelly, Fanny Kemble or Fanny Jarman as being superior artistes, we have a Fanny Drake outvies them all."

Mrs. Drake was succeeded by Mrs. Pritchard, who in 1828 had been known as Mrs. Tatnall, a member of the resident company. She opened on December 11 as Elvira and as Little Pickle, a choice which indicates that she felt as young and as versatile as ever. Commented the *Bee* on December 13: "She has a fine commanding figure—voice full and powerful but not smooth, wanting that mellow softness . . . which is pleasing to the ear. She seems admirably calculated for those characters which require great physical power."

Her personation of Allesandro Massaroni in *The Brigand* was the most popular offering of the engagement. The critic who saw the third presentation of the piece on December 18, regretted that only ten ladies had witnessed her excellent waltzing scene with Miss Petrie. Other roles for her were Helen McGregor, Mrs. Haller, Madame Manette (*Mischief Making*), Madge Wildfire, and Priscilla Tomboy (*The Romp*). Twice during the holidays she acted in Sunday performances attracting "well-filled houses."

Native characters once again came into prominence during the engagement of George H. Hill. The opening play, *Jonathan in England*, on December 22 was followed by *The Green Mountain Boy*, *The Yankee Pedlar*, and *The Knight of the Golden Fleece*, a new piece written for him by J. A. Stone.

December 27 marked the first appearance of an important addition to the staff of the theatre. This was Mr. Reynoldson, an English actor who had taken James Thorne's place at the Park when he left for New Orleans in 1833. Reynoldson made his début as Dandini in *Cinderella* and appeared later in other roles; however, his official title was that of director of the music department. His arrival gave "Colley Cibber," the dramatic critic of the *Bee*, an excuse to ridicule the orchestra and its leader. He stated in the issue of December 29 that Lefolle's "worn out pieces" were "delightfully somniferous," and that the gentleman himself was little more than "an heirloom bequeathed to the theatre as a legacy from some good natured former manager."

The brightest star of this season was Tyrone Power, the Irish comedian whose representations of his countrymen are still regarded as among the best. Three times a week throughout

January he appeared in those roles which had made him a favorite in the East the previous year. There is no record of his opening bill on January 6; the second night he appeared as Dennis Brulgruddery (*John Bull*) and Teddy the Tiler. Other parts were Murtock Delany in *The Irishman in London*, Doctor O'Toole in *The Irish Tutor*, Mons. Morbleau in *Mons. Tonson*, Looney Mactwelter in *The Review*, and Sir Lucius O'Trigger. More interesting than these are the pieces which he introduced to the city: James Kenney's, *The Irish Ambassador*; W. B. Bernard's *The Nervous Man and the Man of Iron*; *The Irish Valet*; and his own works, *Born to Good Luck*, *Etiquette Run Wild*, and *Paddy Carey*.

Minor satellites of January were Mrs. Sharpe, the tragedian from the Park Theatre, and Herr Cline. The latter made occasional appearances during January, offering between the play and the farce his "numerous and extraordinary evolution, gymnastic exercises, and elegant dances on the cord." Mrs. Sharpe opened on the 2nd in *Fazio*, following in *The Hunchback* on the 8th. Other known roles were Kate O'Brien, Lady Teazle to the Sir Peter of Russell, and for her benefit, on January 19, Mrs. Haller and Cinderella (only the first act). Hodges played opposite her as the Prince, and Miss Nelson was the Fairy Queen. This young lady had just rejoined the company, making her first appearance on the 14th as Rosalind in *As You Like It*. From now until the end of the season she played such roles as Colin in *Nature and Philosophy*, Sophia in *The Rendezvous*, Paul in *The Wandering Boys*, Maria in *The Citizen*, and Eugenia in *Sweethearts and Wives*.

Tyrone Power left for Mobile after his benefit on February 2 and his place was taken by James Hackett. Two novelties were among the newcomer's repertoire: Bernard's revision of *The Kentuckian* and his comedy, *Job Fox, the Yankee Valet*. To the first performance of *The Kentuckian* on February 5 the managers "with their accustomed courtesy" invited the Governor, Senate, Representatives, Judges, Mayor, City Council, and Clerks of the Legislature.

By the second week in February Mrs. Knight, Keene, and Hill had returned to New Orleans, and H. J. Finn was in town for an engagement. On the 16th Finn performed Bailie Nicol Jarvie to the Diana Vernon and the Francis Osbaldistone of the vocalists. For his benefit, February 23, Hill enacted Billy Lack-

land, "for the first time," and offered a new farce, *Ovid and Obid, or Yankee Blunders*, and *A Grand Masquerade*. The bill concluded with Finn as Dr. Lenitive in *The Prize*. On Finn's night, February 25, New Orleans saw two of the comedian's new plays, *Kasper Hauser*, and the farce, *Removing the Deposits*, neither of which was performed in New York until the following September.<sup>3</sup>

Another successful novelty of this month was *Tutoona, or The Battle of Saratoga* written by George Washington Harby, a New Orleans schoolteacher and brother of the Charleston playwright, Isaac Harby. All that is known of the play comes from a review in the *Louisiana Advertiser* of the 23rd. Reported this critic:

As a melodrama we find in it everything required to insure its success, a score of hair breadth escapes, a great deal of action, and interesting incident. As a tragedy we would criticise its many trivial passages, condemn its many extravagant tirades, and cry out against scalping, whooping, trotting Indians, but in a melodrama these are all very well, and in this piece have been combined together in a workman-like manner. . . . One thing requires unqualified praise and that is the Prologue. . . . It contains flowing lines and several most beautiful figures.

The last of February Hackett returned for a short engagement. He repeated several of his familiar roles and introduced two new pieces: a farce, *Jonathan Doubikins*, and Moncrieff's drama, *Monsieur Mallet*. The *Bee* of March 22 says that he demanded \$200 a night and that once he played to an audience of only 122 people.

On March 9 Power returned and performed every night until the 17th. During this engagement, his third in New Orleans, he introduced his own comedy, *St. Patrick's Eve, or The Order of the Day*. The bill for the 14th commenced with this play and ended with a repetition of *The Adventures of a Sailor*, a new farce by N. H. Bannister.

Mrs. Stone, "late of the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia," made her bow on March 17. Some may have remembered her as Mrs. Legg, a member of Caldwell's company in 1821; and next year she was to return as Mrs. Bannister. On the evening of her début Bannister played *St. Aldobrand* to her *Imogene*. The after-

<sup>3</sup> Odell, *op. cit.*, IV, 71.

piece was *The Mistletoe Bough* by James Rees, a new drama founded on the ballad of that name. The New Orleans Benefit to John Howard Payne was the feature of the 18th with tickets to the parquet and lower tier of boxes priced at \$5. The opening address, which had been written by Rees, was followed by *Thérèse* with Jane Placide making her only appearance of the season in the name part. Finn, who had recently returned from Natchez, volunteered Captain Bopp (*King Charles II*), and Tyrone Power offered the popular *More Blunders than One*. The press described the benefit as "a partial and impartial failure" though the receipts were \$1,000.

Charles Kemble Mason, the English tragedian, appeared on the 19th, his *Macbeth* having the support of Mrs. Stone. Other roles were Hamlet to Mrs. Knight's Ophelia, Julian St. Pierre in *The Wife*, Petruchio, and Sir Giles Overreach.

Thomas D. Rice succeeded him on the 27th, making his bow in a piece called *Life in Philadelphia*, written for him by Dr. Burns of that city. During this first engagement in New Orleans he introduced the new Aethiopian opera, *Oh! Hush, or The Virginny Cupid*, appeared as Wormwood in *The Lottery Ticket*, and "jumped Jim Crow." On his benefit night, April 6, he essayed the Ghost in *Hamlet* with the assistance of Mrs. Knight and J. J. Adams, an old actor from the Park Theatre who was in New Orleans lecturing on elocution.

The chief attraction at this time was Meyerbeer's opera, *Robert le Diable*, which, on March 30, was presented for the first time in America. A communication in the *Louisiana Courier* of this date notes that Reynoldson had procured a copy of the original score from Pierce Butler of Philadelphia and had curtailed the parts of those instruments which were not in the orchestra of the New Orleans theatre. He was also said to have made the translation from the French. Concluded the article: "Another useful novelty has been introduced which deserves support. Programs of the songs and choruses are printed; and are for sale at the door to all the liberally curious."

Finn came back on April 4 as Doctor Pangloss and continued in a familiar round: Mr. Paul Popp (*Removing the Deposits*), Dr. Lott Whittle (*Kasper Hauser*), Paul Shack (*My Master's Rival*), Philip Garbois (*Legion of Honor*), Sir Peter Teazle, and Caleb Pipkin (*May Queen*). On the 17th he took a benefit and departed.

The crowning event of the season was the engagement with the Barnes family. The performance of *Isabella* on April 20 introduced Mrs. Barnes to an audience which included the Honorable Thomas H. Benton and family. The next night she was joined by John Barnes who appeared as Governor Heartall to her Widow Cheerly and as Delph in *Family Jars*. The seventeen year old Charlotte made her bow as Juliet (*Romeo and Juliet*) on the 22nd; on the 27th she and her mother enacted Francis the First and Louisa in Miss Kemble's tragedy, *Francis the First*. The afterpiece on this night presented Barnes in one of his most famous roles, that of the Dromio of Syracuse, Thorne playing the Dromio of Ephesus. In *The School for Scandal* the family was again united, Charlotte playing Lady Teazle to the Sir Peter of her father and the Mrs. Candor of her mother. Mrs. Barnes was Evelina and her daughter Angela on May 1 while the afterpiece, *The Turnpike Gate*, featured Barnes as Crack. Between the play and the farce Rice "jumped Jim Crow." Miss Barnes continued as Julia to Pearson's Sir Clifford and as Miss Dorillon to the Sir William of Scott and the Lord Priory of her father in *Wives as They Were*. Her dramatization of *The Last Days of Pompeii* on the 7th featured each member of the family, and the next night they concluded their engagement with *The Belle's Stratagem*. They reappeared at Rice's farewell benefit, May 11, in *The Honeymoon*, Barnes playing Jacques, Charlotte Juliana, and Mrs. Barnes Volante. An interesting feature of this night was Rice's rendition of Jim Crow in French and English, "at the request of several French families."

The benefits of this season presented many interesting novelities. On April 24 J. R. Smith, the scenic artist, offered *Rathaimus the Roman*, a five act tragedy written by Bannister. Mrs. Hilson called in J. J. Adams on the 28th to assist her as Rolla (*Pizarro*), and at Scott's benefit this visitor personated Alexander the Great. For his own benefit on May 12, Adams offered *Othello* with Pearson as Iago. At the benefit given John Dumont, the author of *Washington, or the Retaliation*, he introduced another of his pieces entitled *A Day in New Orleans*. Bannister brought out two of his plays on the 16th, *Midnight Murder* and a national sketch, *Old Ironsides*.

Mrs. Russell's benefit was scheduled for May 18, but on that day and the succeeding one the theatre was closed owing to the death of Jane Placide and Mrs. Rowe. Jane Placide had been in

ill health for several years, but Mrs. Rowe had appeared just four days before. In light of this we read with interest the statement in the *Louisiana Advertiser* of May 18 that she died "from debility consequent on overexertion while in a delicate state."

George Farren's night (22nd) marked the return of Mrs. Pritchard who assisted him in a performance of *The Tour de Nesle*. This was said to be Farren's revision of a translation made from the French by Frank Haynes, a young gentleman of the city. So successful was the piece that Russell included it among the pieces offered at his benefit on the last night of the season.

It must have been with some reluctance that Russell and Rowe drew the curtain on May 28, for after only two seasons their monopoly of the English drama in New Orleans was at an end. James Caldwell had decided to return to his old profession and earlier in the month he had laid the cornerstone for a new theatre to be opened in the fall.<sup>4</sup>

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SEASON OF 1835-1836

#### AMERICAN THEATRE, 1835-1836

The American Theatre opened on November 19, 1835, under the management of Richard Russell. James Rowe had died of a self-inflicted wound in Nashville early in October<sup>1</sup> and his position as treasurer of the theatre was now filled by a Mr. Graham. It is not known whether the newcomer entered into partnership with Russell or shared the managerial duties as Rowe had.

The company which was now reunited after campaigns in Nashville, Louisville, and Cincinnati<sup>2</sup> included among the old members Messrs. Russell, Hodges, Hubbard, Thorne, Farren, Williamson, Reynoldson, Scott, Fielding, Bannister, Carr, Radcliffe, Manly, Bristow, and Gray, Mesdames Russell, Hubbard, Carr, Higgins, Salzmänn, and Horne, and Misses Rae and Nelson. The new members were Messrs. F. S. Hill, Maynard, Carlos, Forster, Smith, and Eversull, Mesdames Wallack and Kutz, and Misses Charlotte Crampton and Mary Ann Russell. Later in the season

<sup>4</sup> *Bee*, March 8, 1835.

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Robert H. Jones to James H. Caldwell, October 4, 1835, Court House, New Orleans.

<sup>2</sup> *Bee*, November 18, 1835

they were joined by Mr. and Mrs. J. Herbert, James Wills, Mrs. Keppell, Mrs. Cowell, and the dancers, Mr. and Mrs. Bennie. The orchestra was larger this season and among the members was Signor Gambatti whom Russell had engaged in New York. His trumpet solos were a feature of the musical entertainment given between the plays.

The theatre opened with *The Soldier's Daughter* and on the following evening Charles Eaton made his bow in *Richard III*. The third night brought Mrs. Drake as Julia to Eaton's Master Walter and F. S. Hill's Sir Thomas Clifford. The two stars appeared next as Julian St. Pierre and Mariana in *The Wife* and as Shylock and Portia. On November 27 Mrs. Drake and Scott enacted Margaret and Bouridan in a performance of *La Tour de Nesle* which was announced as George Almar's "with alterations by B. Parsons."<sup>3</sup> The play was repeated at Mrs. Drake's benefit with the afterpiece, *Victoire*, in which she enacted the name part assisted by Farren as Jean. He last appearance was in *Evadne* given for Eaton's benefit on December 1. After her departure Eaton played in *Hamlet* opposite Miss Nelson and in *The Iron Chest* opposite Mrs. Wallace.

The first important novelty was F. S. Hill's *The Shoemaker of Toulouse*, on December 4. It ran for three nights before making way for *Murrell, the Western Land Pirate*, a new melodrama by N. H. Bannister. In the past this young actor-playwright had been severely criticised for carelessness of speech and dress; this season he had been promoted to juvenile tragedian and was considered one of the best actors in the company.

Hodges rejoined the company on December 9 as Count Belino in *The Devil's Bridge*, and the stage was now set for the return of Mary Ann Russell. The young lady had been studying since she quit the New Orleans stage in 1830 and on December 14, designated "Opera Night," she made her bow as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*. The cast included Williamson as Count Almaviva, Reynoldson as Dr. Bartolo, Hodges as Fiorello, and Farren as Basil. The début was not the success which had been anticipated, partly because Miss Russell was hoarse and, reported the *Bee* of the 22nd, "consequently produced many discordant sounds." While she recuperated from her cold, Russell brought out George Almar's *Schinderhannes* and *The Marriage Contract*,

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, November 27, 1835. Undoubtedly B. Parsons was the actor Charles B. Parsons.

a comedy which Bannister had submitted unsuccessfully for the premium offered by Caldwell for the best native play. On the 21st Miss Russell made her second appearance as Cinderella. The critics found her greatly improved in her singing, but they were not enthusiastic.

•Cornelius A. Logan, a favorite comedian in the West, made his New Orleans début on December 23 as Wormwood in *The Lottery Ticket*. During this short engagement he also appeared as Captain Copp in *Charles II* and as Thomas in *The Secret*.

Christmas night brought a curious mixture of entertainment: Charles Selby's farce, *The Unfinished Gentleman*, Rees' *Mistletoe Bough*, Signor Gambatti on the trumpet, and a comic pantomime, *Harlequin and Mother Goose*. In the latter the Bennies were assisted by Charles Parsloe, a clown from Covent Garden. On the 30th Miss Russell sang Alice in *Robert le Diable*, "her last appearance but one." On New Year's Eve Walton, the tragedian, began an engagement as Hamlet, and Logan made his last appearance.

January was ushered in with another of Bannister's new dramas, *The Fall of San Antonio, or Texas Victorious*. In the course of the play a company of United States Troops appeared on the stage and Pasloe and Bennie executed an Indian War Dance. On the 6th Mrs. Drake and Charles Eaton reappeared as Evadne and Ludovico, Walton assisting as Colona. These were patriotic nights at the American Theatre. The profits on the 7th were appropriated to the Texas Cause. The 8th was glorified by a bill made up of *The Soldier's Daughter* and James Rees' new national sketch, *Washington Preserved*. On the 12th Miss Russell essayed Bianca to the Fazio of Walton and F. S. Hill's new comedy, *Opera Mad*, was introduced.

Charles Mason joined the ranks of the visiting tragedians on January 15, enacting Macbeth to the Lady Macbeth of Mrs. Drake. Hereafter the couple appeared together in *Pizarro*, *Rob Roy*, *Venice Preserved* with Eaton as Jaffier, and *Othello* with Eaton as Iago and Mrs. Russell as Emilia. The Shakespearian tragedy was followed by Benjamin Webster's melodrama, *The Golden Farmer*, Walton playing the title role and Thorne as Jemmy Twitcher. Mrs. Drake's benefit on the 22nd presented her in her favorite role of Madame Clermont in *Adrian and Orilla*, F. S. Hill playing Adrian and Walton, the Prince of Altenburg. In

the afterpiece Hill was Petruchio to her Catharine. The next night she reappeared as Lady Teazle to the Joseph Surface of Mason, Farren replacing Russell as Sir Peter.

Manager Russell put his faith in native stars this season. On January 26, Charles B. Parsons, the western tragedian, came out as Virginius. Miss Nelson, who had succeeded to all of Mrs. Rowe's parts, was Virginia and Bannister, Icilius. Parsons' Macbeth had the support of Mrs. Drake and Waton (Macduff). He followed this with two novelties, Jonas B. Phillips' Indian tragedy, *Oranaska*, and William Barrymore's melodrama, *Gilderoy*. For Mrs. Drake's farewell benefit, on February 2, he played Bouridan in *La Tour de Nesle* and Shylock in the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice*. The bill concluded with a repetition of Oxenford's *My Fellow Clerk*, a new farce which was given frequently this season.

Eaton now prepared to depart, offering as his last roles Sir Edward Mortimer, Sir Giles Overreach, and at his benefit on the 5th, Julius Caesar. In the new burletta, *Pig and Whistle, or Actors in Distress*, which followed the Shakespearian play on this night, the star gave imitations of celebrated actors. The same evening witnessed the first appearance of James Wills as Looney Mactwolter in *The Review*. This "volunteer" joined the company later in the season, achieving great popularity with his song, "Billy Barlow."

The announcement of the performance of *The Shoemaker of Toulouse* and *Paul Jones* (one act) on February 11 stated that Scott would make his first appearance since his return from Natchez. Apparently he had been away from New Orleans since the middle of January. His name does not appear in any of the daily notices between January 14 and February 11.

On February 17 Miss Russell essayed Miss Dorillon in *Wives as They Were*. Her repertoire of the previous two months had been limited to musical roles; now she turned to light comedy and melodrama, Donna Olivia in *A Bold Stroke for a Husband*, Kate O'Brien in *Perfection*, and Juliana in *The Honeymoon*, being among her early parts.

T. D. Rice made his reappearance on the 17th in the afterpiece, *The Virginia Mummy*. He remained through March 2, jumping Jim Crow and playing in the Aethiopian operas, *Oh! Hush* and *Bone Squash Diavolo*, the latter new to the city.

Mrs. Knight came out on the 18th as Letitia Hardy and as Gertrude to Thorne's Peter Spyk in *The Loan of a Lover*. Other early parts were Gulnare in *Englishmen in India*, Ariel in *The Tempest*, Cinderella, Laura in *Sweethearts and Wives*, and Polly in *The Beggar's Opera*. She remained in New Orleans until April 2 during which time she seems to have been regarded as a member of the company.

A popular novelty of this season was Buckstone's romantic drama, *The Ice Witch, or the Frozen Hand*, brought out on March 3 and given nightly until the 8th when Charles Mason and his sister began an engagement. This was Miss Mason's first appearance in the city; supported by her brother she played the heroine in *The Hunchback*, *The Wife, Bertram*, *The School for Scandal* (Mason as Sir Peter), *Romeo and Juliet*, and in Jerrold's melodrama, *The Mutiny at the Nore*. In addition to these performances Mason enacted the title role in John Walker's *Napoleon, or the Emperor and the Robber*, a play which he had introduced on an earlier visit.

*The Ice Witch* came back on the 16th as a feature of the benefit given for the children of the late James Rowe. It figured in the bills until the 21st when it made way for F. S. Hill's new melodrama, *The Six Degrees of Crime*. After its first presentation Hill's play was given without curtain raiser or after-piece, "in consequence of its great length."

The benefits began early this season. According to an announcement in the *Bee* of March 26, Farren's took place on Sunday, the 27th. It is impossible to say whether this was one of many Sunday performances or the only one. However, it will be recalled that in previous years Sunday performances at the American Theatre had been given only during the Christmas holidays.

Scott bade farewell on the 28th, including among his offerings the old favorite, *The Pilot*. Mrs. Knight's benefit presented a novelty, Buckstone's musical, *Pet of the Petticoats*. Bannister followed with his newest tragedy, *Gaulantus the Gaul*, and Thorne's night featured *The Rake's Progress*, a melodrama by W. L. Rede.

Little Miss Meadows began an engagement on April 4 when she appeared in *The Four Mowbrays*. During her brief stay the young star impersonated Hecla in *The Ice Witch*, Little Pickle in *The Spoiled Child*, Variella in *The Weathercock*, and Catharine in *Catharine and Petruchio*.

An interesting benefit was Radcliffe's on April 7. The opening piece, *The Honey Moon*, was followed by *Oh! Hush* in which Joe Blackburn, a clown from Brown's Circus, played Sam Johnson, and by an act from *Richard III*, Blackburn enacting Richmond to the Richard of James Wills. For Mrs. Carr's night was announced *Harcanlack, or The Demon of the Serpent's Glen*. This may have been the play of Bannister's which James Rees in his *Dramatic Authors of America* lists as *The Serpent's Glen*. Williamson's benefit brought Charles Shannon's *The Youthful Queen* with Miss Russell as Christine and *Will Watch*, Miss Russell as Mary.

The management turned to opera on April 18 bringing out Bellini's *Sonnambula* with Miss Russell as Armina. It held the boards until the 23rd but according to the *Bee* of that date few witnessed its nightly representations. Miss Russell's benefit on the 24th featured a dramatization of *Charlotte Temple* made by James Rees especially for her. She seems to have been the favorite performer during these last weeks. Planché's adaptation of Scribe's opera, *The Jewess*, was brought out on May 3 with the young actress in the role of Rachel. The spectacle ran almost nightly until the end of the season, and many of those actors whose benefits fell within this period offered it in preference to other pieces.

The season came to an end on May 25 though three nights later the theatre was reopened that Treasurer Graham might have a benefit. Outstanding features of this season had been the excellence of the company and the popularity of several of the plays. The *Bee* of May 23 asserted that in relying on the strength and capabilities of his own stock company and by exhibiting them in good drama, Russell had succeeded beyond his expectations.

ST. CHARLES THEATRE, 1835-1836

The new St. Charles Theatre, which James H. Caldwell opened in the fall of 1835, stood on St. Charles Street between Poydras and Gravier and extended almost to Camp Street. Caldwell had purchased the site in Jane Placide's name in 1833,<sup>4</sup> when he was negotiating with Russell and Rowe for the lease of his theatrical circuit. The purchase at this early date and in a name other than his own would seem to indicate the correctness of

<sup>4</sup> Notarial Acts of William Boswell, March 7, 1833; Notarial Acts of William Cristy, May 14, 1835, Court House, New Orleans.

Ludlow's belief that Caldwell was not sincere in announcing his retirement and that it was but a ruse.<sup>5</sup>

The theatre, designed by A. Mondelli, was the most magnificent in the South and one of the largest in the country. It had a frontage of one hundred thirty feet, a depth of one hundred ninety, and a height of eighty-six feet. Ten Corinthian columns supported the portico which ran across the front between the second and third floors and over this was a balustrade decorated with statues of Apollo and the muses.

Fluted Ionic columns supported the vestibule on the main floor, and on either side were stairways leading to a similar vestibule above. The parquet held two hundred and the pit five hundred. There were five tiers of seats including the pit boxes and the gallery. Attached to the boxes of the first tier were boudoirs, eight feet square and ten feet high, where the ladies might dress or retire as they wished.

The proscenium arch rested on Corinthian columns and the stage, said to be the largest in America, was ninety-five feet by ninety. Back of this was a large scenery room and on either side a green room. Two straiways led to the twenty-six dressing rooms and the room for the wardrobe, properties, and scenery.<sup>6</sup>

The stage manager for the first three months was J. W. Forbes; on his departure in February he was succeeded by W. H. Latham. Mondelli was chief scenic artist; his assistants, J. R. Smith, J. Cowell, and Schinotti. J. G. Maeder was musical director, H. Willis, leader of the orchestra, and George Holland, secretary and treasurer.

The company included Messrs. H. J. Finn, John H. Barton, J. W. Forbes, Latham, Joe Cowell, Henry Hunt, Vincent De Camp, H. G. Pearson, Ben DeBar, Williams, Williamson, Spencer, Schinotti, Corri, Larkin, Burke, Ford, Loomis, Solomon, Stanley, Brace, Lenox, Benedict, Harris, Dennison, Markham, Scot; Mesdames Gibbs, Maeder (the former Clara Fisher), Kinlock, Thorne, Browne, Bannister (formerly Mrs. Stone), Burke; and Misses Louise Lane (in March she became Mrs. Henry Hunt), Charlotte Cushman, Pelham, Copeland, Verity, Graham, DeBar, Vos, Rhodes, and Henning. Before the season was far advanced James E. Murdoch arrived from Philadelphia, and during several

<sup>5</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 404.

<sup>6</sup> The *Bee* of April 7, 1835, contains a detailed description of the theatre.

months Mrs. Cowell played with the company. The orchestra was a large one of twenty-nine pieces and included such well-known musicians as J. T. Norton, trumpet, Signor Cioffi, trombone, J. K. Kendall, clarinet, and Signor Boucher, violincello.

The theatre opened on November 30 with a prize address, overtures by the orchestra, and the favorite plays, *The School for Scandal* and *The Spoiled Child*. In the comedy Vincent De Camp played Sir Peter, Barton, Charles, Forbes, Joseph, Cowell, Crabtree, Mrs. Maeder, Lady Teazle, and Louisa Lane, Maria. The afterpiece served to introduce Miss DeBar as Little Pickle.

The *Bee* of the next day states that a very numerous audience attended the opening "despite the reports that had been industriously and villainously circulated of its being likely to fall." This commentator had been very much pleased with the orchestral performance and the "*tout ensemble*" of the decorations, although they were unfinished. "But we cannot boast of anything else," he continued. "The house is at present cold and cheerless; and the members of the theatrical corps are not properly disciplined or accustomed to so large a theatre."

The second night brought *The Marriage of Figaro* with Mrs. Gibbs, the English actress, as Susanna, Charlotte Cushman as Countess Almaviva, Latham as Figaro, Hunt as Count Almaviva, H. J. Finn as Antonio, and Mrs. Maeder as Cherubino. After a second presentation the *Bee* (December 4) announced that it did not think much of Caldwell's operatic force. Mrs. Gibbs' voice was described as being soft and sweet and well adapted for ballads but lacking in volume, flexibility, and strength. "Still," commented this critic, "it is greatly superior to that of Miss Cushman, who made the worst countess we have had the honor of seeing for some time; she is scarcely a third rate songstress and we confess . . . we were much more pleased with the performance of Miss Verity as Bacharina." Hunt's voice was said to be "feeble, husky, and thin without much compass or control." Only for the orchestra did the critic have unqualified praise. He pronounced it a "credit to the theatre and with the exception of that at Orleans Street (the French theatre), . . . probably the best in the United States."

Barton and Mrs. Maeder were Duke Aranza and Juliana in *The Honey Moon* on the 4th and a Mr. Frimbley appeared after the play as the Living Statues. On the 6th *John of Paris*, with

Mrs. Gibbs as Vincent and Miss Cushman as the Princess of Navarre, preceded *Charles II* in which Mrs. Gibbs was Mary, Miss Copeland, Lady Clara, and Hunt, Charles II. Miss Copeland had made her New Orleans début only a few days before when she played the Queen to Forbes' Hamlet.

Mr. and Mrs. Ternan were the first stars to visit the new theatre. They opened a short engagement on December 7 in *The Hunchback*. Mrs. Cowell, making her first appearance in four years, played Helen to their Master Walter and Julia; Forbes was Sir Thomas Clifford, and Finn, Modus. In rapid succession the stars appeared as Jaffier and Belvidera, with Pearson as Pierre; Fazio and Bianca; Mr. and Mrs. Beverly in *The Gamester*; Sir John and Lady Restless in *All in the Wrong*; and Lord Henry and Lady Julia in *Personation*.

With the departure of the Ternans on December 12, Mlle. Celeste began an engagement which lasted throughout the month. Nightly she appeared in melodramas and ballets, introducing during her stay J. T. Haines' *The French Spy* and *The Wizard Skiff*; *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, a spectacle written for her by W. B. Bernard; *The Dumb Brigand*; *The Moorish Bride* by Caroline Lee Hentz; and *The Devil's Daughter* by George Almar. These were preceded or followed by musical pieces and farces given by the company. On December 16 *The Poor Soldier* enlisted Miss Cushman as Patrick and Latham as Darby. On the 17th James E. Murdoch made his bow as Tristram Fickle in *The Weathercock* and the next night he played with Mrs. Maeder in *Perfection*. The songs and acting of Miss Meadows, "the juvenile vocalist," were featured on the 24th. Since her guardian, Mrs. Frederick Browne, was a regular member of the company, the youthful actress was called on throughout the season for songs and impersonations of the Four Mowbrays and Little Pickle.

For Christmas night were advertised *George Barnwell* with Murdoch and Mrs. Bannister; *Old King Cole*; Celeste's dances; Frimbey's living statues; and the appearance of J. Clayton, the Western Aeronaut, "should he arrive in time." This gentleman had ascended at noon in his balloon "inflated by Mr. Caldwell from the gas works of this city."

Miss Lydia Phillips, "the highly distinguished tragedian from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane", succeeded Celeste on January 11. She opened as Juliet to Murdoch's Romeo and followed it on the

next night with Julia in *The Hunchback*. Thereafter, she enacted Portia, Mrs. Beverly to the Beverly of Forbes, Mrs. Haller to the Stranger of Pearson, Lady Macbeth, Mariana to the Julian St. Pierre of Barton, Desdemona to the Othello of Forbes, and Lady Townly to the Lord Townly of Barton. Her benefit on January 25 presented her as Belvidera, Pearson being Pierre and Forbes, Jaffier. The bill concluded with a novelty, Planché's *Michel Perrin*.

G. W. Hill began an engagement almost immediately and ran through his usual repertoire of native roles. The only new part was offered for his benefit, February 5, when he introduced J. S. Jones' recent comedy, *The Adventure, or The Yankee in Tripoli*. At Forbes' benefit and last appearance on the 6th Hill volunteered as Jonathan Doubikins.

The Ternans reappeared on February 8. They now came out as Pizarro and Cora (*Pizarro*), Young Marlow and Miss Hardcastle, Luke Eveline and Sicily in T. J. Serle's piece, *The Shadow on the Wall*, and Sir George Touchwood and Letitia Hardy in *The Belle's Stratagem*. Mrs. Cowell's performance as Mrs. Rackett in this latter comedy was her last on the St. Charles stage. The following night she appeared at the American Theatre where she performed until the end of the season. On the 22nd, at the benefit given Latham, the newly appointed stage manager, the Ternans offered Knowles' new play, *The Beggar of Bethel Green*.

A more popular novelty was the spectacular *Peter Wilkins, or The Flying Islanders* which had been brought out on the 21st. In the cast were Miss Cushman as Peter Wilkins, Miss DeBar as Yourakee, and Latham as Nicodemus.

Miss Phillips had returned on February 18 and after opening as Julia in *The Hunchback*, Barton replacing Forbes as Master Walter, she appeared as Lady Teazle and as Juliana in *The Honey Moon*. On the two latter occasions the afterpiece was Selby's petite comedy, *A Day in Paris*, featuring Louisa Lane.

Thomas Cooper arrived sometime during the last week in February and with the aid of Miss Phillips offered *Macbeth*, *The Gamester*, *Jane Shore*, and *Othello*. In *Wives as They Were*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Virginus*, *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, and *Damon and Pythias*, the tragedian was supported by

his daughter, Priscilla Cooper. On March 12 Miss Phillips took her benefit and departed, and three nights later the Coopers made their last appearance in *The Hunchback*.

Meanwhile Caldwell had inaugurated what he hoped would become a regular feature at the St. Charles, a season of Italian Opera with performances three times a week on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday. At the head of the troupe was Signor Montresor who had managed the disastrous opera season at the Richmond Hill Theatre in 1833.<sup>7</sup> The principal singers were Signoras Pedrotti and Marozzi, and Signors Ravaglia, Sapignoli, and De Rosa, all of whom had sung at Richmond Hill or at the Italian Opera House in New York. Twenty-five musicians were engaged to supplement the regular orchestra.

The first performance on March 6 was Bellini's *Il Pirata*. It was repeated on every opera night until the 18th when Rossini's *Otello* was given. Thereafter repetitions of these two operas alternated with Bellini's *Norma* and *La Straniera* and Rossini's *Zelmira*.

"The Italian Opera Company has taken the town by storm," reported the *Bee* of March 7 after the first performance. Three months later an editorial in the same paper referred to Caldwell as the opera's "sole patron and sole sufferer." It was stated that he had engaged the troupe at an expense of \$20,000 and had lost \$10,750 by the arrangement. The next day there appeared a contradiction of this statement. The communicant said that Montresor had told him the engagement had cost Caldwell not more than \$11,000 and as nightly receipts had sometimes been from \$2,000 to \$3,000 such a loss was impossible.<sup>8</sup>

Early in the season Caldwell had declared his intention of raising the tone of the drama. Yet now he turned to equestrian plays and on March 24 revived *Timour the Tartar* with the aid of the stud of horses from Brown's circus. After frequent repetitions it made way for *El Hyder* and *The Cataract of the Ganges*. Familiar farces generally served as the curtain raisers on these nights.

*Cinderella* was revived on April 11, Miss Gibbs playing the title role, Finn, Pedro, Latham, Dandini, Hunt, the Prince, and Miss DeBar and Charlotte Cushman the two daughters. Once again Hunt and Charlotte Cushman were severely criticized.

<sup>7</sup> Odell, *op. cit.*, III, 642-645.

<sup>8</sup> *Bee*, June 8, 1836.

"We would not want to see a worse prince," commented the *Bee* on April 12. "As for the ladies who attempted to represent the daughters . . . we have scarcely seen worse attempts for some time. Miss DeBar sings ballads tolerably, but Miss Cushman can sing nothing; therefore in justice to herself and in mercy to the audience she should confine herself to acting parts in which she can perform with success."

On April 19 the management announced that *Macbeth* would be given shortly for the purpose of introducing Charlotte Cushman as Lady Macbeth "which character she has been studying under a competent teacher." The performance took place on the 23rd and at last the dramatic critic on the *Bee* was impressed. In the issue of the 25th he wrote: "To such line of character she should confine her attention, if she means to excel on the stage and then she may command approbation and applause, but as for her singing it is prodigious."

Mrs. Gibbs prepared to depart as April drew to a close. Her benefit on the 25th presented her as Countess Rosalvina to Hunt's Count Belino (*The Devil's Bridge*), as Cinderella (only the finale), and as Eudiga in the local première of Planché's *Charles XII*. On the 26th Planché's adaptation from *The Jewess* of Scribe was introduced with Mrs. Henry Hunt, the former Louisa Lane, as Rachel.

The benefits at the St. Charles brought little in the way of novelty. The new patriotic drama, *Texas*, offered by Mrs. Bannister, seems to have been her husband's *Fall of San Antonio, or Texas Victorious*, introduced at the American Theatre earlier in the year. For his benefit Mondelli announced a translation of Victor Hugo's *Lucrece Borgia* made by F. Haynes of New Orleans. Charlotte Cushman played the name part assisted by Pearson and Barton.

The most interesting of these novelties was *The Martyr Patriots, or Louisiana in 1769* given by Pearson on May 16. The play had been written in 1834 by Thomas Warton Collens, a young lawyer of the city, and Miss Nelson had chosen it for her benefit that season at the American Theatre. Pearson, however, had refused to learn his part and the play had been laid aside.<sup>9</sup> Now he and Mrs. Hunt took the leads.

This poetic drama was based on an event in the colonial history of Louisiana, the uprising of the little band of loyal

<sup>9</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, May 7, 17, 1834.

Frenchmen against the Spanish governor, O'Reilley, in 1769. Between the fourth and fifth acts was exhibited a grand dioramic vision foretelling the independence of Louisiana and the rise and prosperity of the city of New Orleans. According to a communication in the *Bee* of May 19, this was the only feature of the play to which the management did justice. The writer said that Collens' play had been "garbled, butchered, and parodied," and "the most ridiculous and crude conception substituted in the place of the language as originally written." As representative of the careless manner in which the play had been produced, he cited the instance in the last act when the five martyr leaders of the uprising were shot by a detachment of soldiers. This consisted of only four men, we are told. "So that we must suppose them to be even greater shots than Crockett himself, for not only did they kill five men, but one of their stray balls put to death the heroine of the piece."

"By particular desire" Charlotte Cushman repeated *Macbeth* on her night (May 20), following it with Charles Selby's new interlude, *The Married Rake*, and *Blue Beard* in which she played Fatima. For Miss DeBar's benefit, Charlotte Cushman enacted Rachael Heywood in *The Rent Day* assisted by Pearson as Martin. *The Wandering Boys* was revived for the occasion that the beneficiary and Mrs. Hunt might appear as Paul and Justin.

The season came to an end on May 28 when Holland's benefit presented him for the first time at the St. Charles. His bill consisted of the familiar *Whims of a Comedian*, *The Secret*, and *A Day after the Fair*.

This first season of the St. Charles Theatre was a disappointment to Caldwell. He had built and dedicated to the drama one of the largest theatres in the country and the public had failed to give him the support needed to maintain such an establishment. In commenting on this lack of patronage the editor of the *Bee* (May 23) suggested that contributing causes may have been the increased price of admission and public disapproval of Caldwell's having built another theatre before the expiration of Russell's lease on the American. Caldwell himself felt that a general apathy toward the legitimate drama was responsible for his failure, and accordingly he announced that next season he would concentrate on opera, melodrama, ballet, and spectacles.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Bee*, June 7, 1836.

## SUMMER SEASON, 1836

The St. Charles reopened on June 1 for a short summer season of comedy and farce. The opening bill featured J. M. Field, now returned after an absence of three years, as Gossamer in *Laugh When You Can* and as Jeremy Diddler in *Raising the Wind*. He played the leads in the comedies of the next few nights, enacted Carwin to Mrs. Hunt's Thérèse, and for his benefit on the 11th, essayed Sir Giles Overreach.

Mrs. Minnich of the Mobile Theatre made her bow on the 13th as Justin in *The Wandering Boys* and as Priscilla Tomboy in *The Romp*. On the 14th George Holland began a short engagement with *A Day After the Fair*.

Novelties were a feature of this summer season. The first was Charles Selby's *Frank Fix Phipps*, introduced on the 10th. The bill for the 17th consisted of the new pieces, *The King's Word* and *The Prairie Girls*, both announced as the work of "a gentleman of this city." Holland's benefit on the 22nd presented Mrs. J. R. Planché's drama, *The Sledge Driver*, and P. P. O'Callaghan's burletta, *The Married Bachelor*. James Kenney's *Not a Word* came on the 23rd a farce *Pay for Peeping* on the 27th; and on the 28th, T. J. Thackeray's comedy, *The Force of Nature*.

The season came to a close on July 4 with a first performance of J. S. Jones' *The Liberty Tree* and *Boston Boys*, patriotic songs and recitations, and *The Hole in the Wall*, Holland reappearing as Thomas. As far as the extant records show, this was the first summer season of any consequence.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE SEASON OF 1836-1837

## AMERICAN THEATRE, 1836-1837

Richard Russell and his company returned from the summer campaign in Cincinnati to a theatre which had been "newly and splendidly decorated and repainted by Joe Cowell, Jr." Noted the *Commercial Bulletin* of November 23: "The American Theatre has undergone suitable repairs . . . and the interior particularly evinces much comfort as well as taste, in the arrangements which have been made. The boxes are neatly cushioned, as also the seats in the parquette (*sic*) and an air of neatness prevails throughout which hitherto has not been so apparent."

Russell's staff consisted of F. S. Hill, stage manager; Higgins, prompter; Jones, leader of the orchestra; Graham, treasurer; Lafferty, wardrobe keeper; and Joe Cowell, Jr., chief scenic artist. In the company were Messrs. Farren, Hodges, Archer, "from the London and Park Theatres," A. W. Fenno, "from the Boston Theatre," Foster, Barclay, Fielding, Clarke, Smith, Gray, Bristow, Wallace, Sowerby, Eversul, Vancamp, Fairchild, Walton, Milot, McCoy, Phillips, Carr and Lake, Mesdames Russell, G. Rowe, Carr, Minnich, and Greene, Misses Russell, Rowe, Clarke, and Henning, and Mr. and Mrs. Bennie, the dancers. These were joined later in the season by Miss Randolph, Sam Cowell, Delmon, Burke, Kelly, and Mrs. Henry Hunt.

The theatre opened on November 21 with *The Hunchback* and *The Purse*, and on the second night came the first star, William Abbott. His Hamlet was supported by the Ophelia of Miss Clarke and the Polonius of Farren. In the afterpiece, *The Actress of All Work*, Mrs. Greene, "from the Eastern Theatre," sustained six characters. The third night saw the first appearance of Mrs. H. Lewis, the English actress, and C. B. Parsons, the American tragedian. Their performance in *Bertram* was followed by a novelty, *Tom Cringle's Log, or Mat o' the Iron Hand* by Edward Fitzball.

Abbott continued as Benedick to the Beatrice of Miss Russell, Fenno, who had been engaged as second tragedian and heavy, playing Claudio. On the 26th the star introduced *The King's Fool*, a historical drama by John Millingen, in which he had been successful in the East. Archer, the new vocalist, made his début in this as Melchior. Abbott's roles were those which Caldwell had so often enacted: Don Felix in *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret*, Belcour in *The West Indian*, Duke Aranza in *The Honey Moon*, Puff in *The Critic*, etc. On December 10, he essayed Modus (*The Hunchback*) "for this night only," and on the 14th he introduced a new play, *Hofer the Tell of the Tyrol*. This melodrama of Edward Fitzball's proved so popular that he repeated it at his benefit on the 18th.

Meanwhile Mrs. Lewis and C. B. Parsons were featured on the nights when Abbott did not perform. She enacted Mariana (*The Wife*) on the 25, and Richard III on the 28th, Parsons appearing on both of these evenings in the afterpiece, *Charles II*. For the last performance prior to his departure for the Natchez

theatre Parsons brought out *Caius Silius*, a new prize tragedy which N. H. Bannister had written expressly for him. After the play Bennie and Mrs. Lewis gave a dance from *La Juive*. This actress seems to have been capable of assuming any character; her Romeo was followed by personations of Bill Jones (*The Black Brig of Bermuda*), Emilia (*Othello*), and Virginius. At her benefit on December 12 she appeared in such widely diversified roles as Wiliam in *Black Eyed Susan*, Jane Shore, Sir Giles Overreach, and the Wild Boy of Bohemia in John Walker's melodrama of that name.

Mrs. Knight commenced an engagement on December 13. Miss Horton, a vocalist from Covent Garden Theatre, had been in the city for several days and on the 19th she appeared as Cinderella supported by Mrs. Knight as the Prince. In *The Marriage of Figaro*, on the 23rd, Miss Horton was Susanna, Miss Russell was Countess Almaviva, and Mrs. Knight was Cherubino the Page. Charles E. Horn, who had made his début the previous night in *Guy Mannering*, was Count Almaviva. On the second presentation of *Cinderella* Horn replaced Mrs. Knight as the Prince, the lady now appearing as the Fairy Queen. With the performance of *John of Paris* on the 31st Miss Horton and Horn departed.

The engagement of eight nights which James Wallack began on January 3 brought nothing new. It interests us, however, for during the star's visit Miss Russell appeared in many roles which had not previously been in her repertoire. She not only played opposite Wallack in *Pizarro*, *The Wife*, and *The Hunchback*, but she played Portia and Rachael Heywood (*The Rent Day*), as well as Mrs. General Dartmouth (*Spring and Winter*) and Nell (*The Adopted Child*). During Wallack's second engagement, which began on February 7, she appeared as Lady Macbeth, Imogene (*Bertram*), Mary Copp (*Charles II*) and Catharine (*Catharine and Petruchio*), all new roles for her.

Hodges made his first appearance of the season on January 7 as the Prince to Mrs. Knight's Cinderella. The voice of this actress had sadly deteriorated in the last few years, but the management knew that the presence of Hodges and the popularity of the opera itself could be counted on to draw a full house. The 9th brought the local première of William Bernard's *Lucille* with Mrs. Knight in the title role. Russell showed cleverness in pro-

ducing the play at this time, for the St. Charles Theatre was awaiting the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Keeley, the English comedians for whom Bernard had written the piece. Nine days after the Keeleys had opened in T. H. Bayly's burletta, *The Swiss Cottage*, Russell brought it out at the American with Mrs. Knight as Lisette Gierstein, Hill as Natz Treck, and Archer as Corporal Max.

Charles Mason opened an engagement in *Rob Roy* on January 18. Several nights later he was joined by Mrs. Lewis and Forbes in a presentation of *Othello*, Forbes in the title role, and thereafter the three appeared together in *The Hunchback* and *Jane Shore*. The role of Alice in the former, taken earlier in the season by Miss Russell, was now played by Miss Randolph, a young actress who had made her first appearance on any stage at the St. Charles a month before. Mrs. Lewis played opposite Mason in *Macbeth* and *George Barnwell* and on her benefit night, January 30, Forbes was Alexander to her Roxana. After her departure Miss Russell again succeeded to the leads, appearing with the visiting tragedians in *Julius Caesar* and in *The Hunchback*. At Forbes' benefit on February 11 she essayed Ophelia.

Several débuts took place on February 15. Kelly, a low comedian, made his bow as Solomon Swap and afterwards Herr Cline entertained with "astonishing metamorphoses." As an added attraction during his engagement, Herr Cline was sometimes joined on the elastic cord by his grandmother, a lady who, the notices say, was able to rival him, notwithstanding her age.

Miss Nelson was welcomed back on February 23 in Barnett's opera, *The Mountain Sylph*. The piece was admirably adapted to display the actress's splendid figure and her "perilous yet beautiful descent from the clouds" had won her many admirers on her northern tour. After seven repetitions of the opera, she appeared as Hecla in *The Ice Witch*, a part which Mrs. Knight had played before her departure for Natchez, shortly after February 8. For her farewell benefit on March 10, Miss Nelson offered the cloister scene from last season's favorite, *Robert le Diable*, and appeared as Ernestine in *The Somnambulist*.

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis returned in March, bringing with them George Pitt's *The Whistler*, a new melodrama adapted from Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*. When Celeste opened at the St. Charles in *The French Spy* on March 7, Mrs. Lewis appeared in

the same piece at the American. She gave it for the fourth time on the 11th when Thomas Bishop, a former member of the St. Charles company, was allowed a benefit. According to a notice in the *Daily Picayune* on April 21, Bishop had left that theatre "not wishing to hazard his reputation by singing the music of a piece at an unusually short notice."

The legitimate drama again featured in the bills when Josephine Clifton began an engagement in *Fazio* on March 23. To insure her success Russell arranged for Charles Mason to play with her. On seven consecutive nights their representations of familiar tragedies attracted "good and respectable houses." A new police officer was on hand to see that the ladies of the audience were not offended by the "rowdy set" that had frequented the theatre of late.<sup>1</sup>

The most popular of the season's novelties was *Lafitte*, a dramatization of Joseph Ingram's novel made by James Rees and "altered and adapted to the stage by George Farren." William Abbott reappeared in the role of the famous pirate; Farren impersonated General Andrew Jackson; and Kelly had a Yankee role, "written expressly for him." Cowell and his assistants worked hard on this piece and in one scene the audience witnessed four distinct actions occurring at the same time. In spite of the critics who pronounced it "rather dull in portions," "a ridiculous compound of 'rant, rhapsody, and rhetoric,'" the play seems to have been successful and by April 14 had reached its tenth performance.

Novelty and benefits were almost daily fare in April. On the 15th Barclay introduced George Almar's melodrama, *The Fire Raiser*. The following night "the pretty little Miss Carr" offered among her entertainments the extravaganza, "The Coal Black Rose," as performed by her four year old son. Fielding's benefit on April 17 marked the first appearance this season of Mrs. Duff, who had now remarried and was living in New Orleans. The bill on this night concluded with *Hard Times in New Orleans*, a local farce written by George Harby. Hodges announced that on his night he would appear as Cinderella and sing a portion of the music "in imitation of a celebrated vocalist lately attached to this establishment." Undoubtedly he referred to Mrs. Knight who had terminated a second engagement on April 1.

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Picayune*, March 25, 1887.

There was a brief recess from novelties when Miss Clifton reappeared on the 19th. Supported by Parsons, who was more popular in New Orleans than the English actor Mason, she went through a familiar round of characters. At her benefit on April 26 Fenno was allowed to play with her in selected acts from *Fazio*.

Mrs. Duff succeeded Miss Clifton and with the aid of Parsons presented those plays which had long been associated with her name. The one role in which she had not previously appeared here was that of Victoire in *The Orphan of Paris* presented on May 2.

May was a busy month at the American. Mrs. Pritchard began an engagement on the 4th and appeared some twelve times before the end of the season. The resident members of the company continued with their benefits, introducing among the plays Bernard's melodrama, *2548, or The Farmer's Story*, and Benjamin Webster's *The Golden Farmer*. Mrs. Henry Hunt came over from the St. Charles on the 9th and, after appearing in *The Turn Out* and in *Perfection* took her "first and only benefit in New Orleans." On this evening (May 13) Hill introduced his new petite comedy, *Love and a Bunch*. The last novelty of the season was Moncrieff's seventeen-year-old melodrama, *Ivanhoe*, which had its local première on Mrs. Pritchard's benefit night.

Master Burke now appeared in *The Weathercock*, *The Review*, and in other familiar pieces which he had offered in April at the St. Charles. At the American the excellence of his violin concertos as well as the popularity of his supporting *artiste*, Miss Russell, may have compensated somewhat for the "peculiar tone" in his voice which had displeased the critics of the earlier engagement.

The last night of the season was given to Miss Russell for her benefit. The bill for the evening included a comedy, two farces, Fenno's recitation of his poem, "Washington and Lafayette," a dance by Miss Hennings, a trumpet solo by Gambatti, the waltz scene from *The Brigand* featuring Mrs. Pritchard and the beneficiary, and a farewell address. This was said to have been quite an occasion; a splendid gold necklace was presented to Miss Russell and wreaths and the like were showered down upon her.

The American Theatre had been well attended this season. As one critic remarked, "Dick Russell had presented the public

with a variety of good things: the choicest gems of tragedy, English melodrama, new farces, and sterling comedies."<sup>2</sup>

The success of the past two seasons had shown Russell that he need not fear the rivalry of the new St. Charles. Often during this time the "little Camp" had not been able to accommodate the crowds that flocked there. Now, a year before his lease on the Camp expired, he issued the prospectus for a theatre to be erected by public subscription and opened in the fall of 1838.<sup>3</sup> In March he purchased a site on the southeast corner of Magazine Street and Delord and within a few months a company had been formed and chartered by the state legislature for the purpose of building the "New American Theatre."<sup>4</sup>

ST. CHARLES THEATRE, 1836-1837

The St. Charles opened for its second season on November 14, 1836. The interior which had been described as cold and cheerless on the opening night a year ago was now completely finished. "Upon it," said the *Bee* of November 25, "a liberal hand has lavished every ornament that unbounded munificence can confer." The most outstanding of the new decorations was the magnificent chandelier which had been purchased in London at a cost of \$10,750. Twelve feet in height, and thirty feet in circumference, it weighed 4,500 pounds and was illuminated with one hundred and seventy-six gas lights.<sup>5</sup> The editor of the *Commercial Bulletin* (November 16) was eloquent in his praise of this "brilliant collection of crystals", declaring: "He who could gaze upon its magnificence as it emits its flood of mellowed light, without yielding admiration to its splendor and beauty, must be wanting much in the ingredient of taste. Such a spectacle itself should draw thousands to view it."

Many of the former company returned, among them H. G. Pearson, Barton, Finn, Latham, Hunt, Williams, DeBar, Corri, Lyons, Spencer, and Keppell, Mesdames Hunt, Bannister, and Kinlock. To these were added Mrs. Keppell, Bannister, Radcliffe, Dennison, Ruthven, Fenner, Saunders, Manley, Paret, Raylea, Tracy, and Hamilton. Later in the season came Thomas Bishop, Page, Mrs. Saunders, Mrs. H. Cramer, Miss Melton, and Mr. and Mrs. Barker, who had been engaged by Caldwell's agent on a

<sup>2</sup> *Louisiana Courier*, May 27, 1837.

<sup>3</sup> *Commercial Bulletin*, February 3, 1837.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, March 21, April 18, 1837.

<sup>5</sup> *The True American*, September 14, 1839.

recent visit to England. Fallon was leader of the orchestra; Barton was stage manager during the first of the season and Latham during the latter part. George Holland continued as treasurer and occasionally performed with the company.

The opening bill on the 14th consisted of the "grand spectacle", *Peter Wilkins* and *The Secret. Macbeth* with Charles Mason in the title role was announced for the 16th but when sudden indisposition prevented his appearance, Barton took the part. On the 18th the star made his bow in *Hamlet* assisted by Mrs. Bannister as the Queen and Mrs. Hunt as Ophelia. The next night brought the first novelty, Bannister's domestic drama, *Infidelity*, or *The Husband's Return*. Mrs. Hunt and Mrs. Bannister were busy these nights; they appeared as Lady Ann and Queen Elizabeth to Mason's Richard (*Richard III*), Albert and Emma to his William Tell, and Cora and Elvira to Pearson's Rolla. When Mason offered Byron's *Sardanapalus* for his benefit on November 25, Mrs. Hunt enacted the role of the Greek slave. In the afterpiece Mrs. Bannister was Catharine to the beneficiary's Petruchio.

Mrs. Shaw, "from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and Park Theatre," made her New Orleans debut on November 24 in *The Wife*, Mason playing opposite her as St. Pierre. She continued as the Widow Cheerly, Juliet, Variella (*The Weathercock*), Lady Teazle, Christine (*The Youthful Queen*), Bianca (*Fazio*), and Cordelia (*Lear*). Barton, who was the leading man this season, appeared with her as Mercutio, Tristram Fickle, Charles Surface, Steinberg (*The Youthful Queen*), and as Lear. For her benefit, December 5, Mrs. Shaw presented a play not previously seen here, Buckstone's *Agnes de Vere*.

The next visitor was Mrs. Drake who appeared on December 3. The "tragic lioness of the West" offered nothing new, but the roles in which she appeared had long been favorite ones in this city. Barton now turned from comedy roles to assist her in *The Stranger*, *Rob Roy*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Vencie*, *The Gamester*, etc. On her benefit night, December 14, Pearson played opposite her in *The Tower of Nesle*.

The Italian Opera Company initiated its season with *La Cenerentola* on December 4. Included in the company were Ravaglia, Orlandi, De Rosa, Mannetti, and Signora Marozzi. On several occasions Madame Thielman and Mrs. Keppell of the

stock company sang with them. As there was still some doubt as to whether opera would be adequately supported, the season was a short one with performances only on Sundays. The company offered Rossini's *Il Barbier di Seviglia*, *L'Inganno Felica*, and *Il Turco in Italia*, and for their last performance, on February 27, the comic opera, *Monsieur de Chiffonne*.

Mr. Balls, the light comedian, made his bow on December 12 in *Laugh When You Can* and *Three and the Deuce*. Also introduced on this night was Mrs. Saunders, "from the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh," a new member of the company. Caldwell now announced that he would present legitimate comedy with "exceptional casts" which were to include Messrs. Balls, Barton, Finn, who had rejoined the company on December 7, Holland, and Mrs. Shaw. The first of the revivals was O'Keeffe's *Wild Oats*, Balls enacting Rover, Mrs. Shaw, Lady Amaranthe, and Finn, Ephraim Smooth. Other standard comedies followed but to the disappointment of many who had hoped the public taste might be elevated by these bills, the St. Charles continued to be poorly attended.

Caldwell turned to novelties next and on December 23 brought out *Oceola, or The Death of Dade*, "an entirely new drama never acted," written by a gentleman of Cincinnati. Though generally the New Orleans audiences were quick to applaud native talent, *Oceola* was coolly received. Explained the critic, "X," in the *Courier* of the 24th: "The Indian character is not dramatic, and this subject is doubly unfortunate in being the story of our own defeat and disgrace. The triumph of our enemies over ourselves can never be represented with success on any stage."

Several new recruits joined the company in December. On the 16th Thomas Bishop made his American début as Henry Bertram. Miss Melton, "from the Haymarket and the St. James Theatre," made a very successful first appearance as Peggy in *The Country Girl* and Ninette in *The Young Hussar*. She soon became a favorite, appearing in such roles as Sally Scraggs in *The Englishmen in India*, Ellen in *Married Yesterday*, Lady Caroline in *John Bull*, and Nannette in *The Blue Devils*. Another newcomer was Madame Thielman, a German vocalist and actress, who made her bow on December 29 in *John of Paris*.

While waiting for the next star, Caldwell brought out the first series of Bannister's fifteen act drama, *The Wandering Jew*.

This was the melodrama which was given in Philadelphia the following November under the title *The Destruction of Jerusalem*.<sup>6</sup> The New Orleans critics spoke highly of the piece and of the new scenery which had been prepared especially for it, but Caldwell did not produce the other two series.

Mrs. Pritchard opened on January 7 in *The Tower of Nesle* and *The Brigand* and performed each night until the 17th. New pieces in her repertoire were Somerset's melodrama, *The Wreck Ashore, or The Ocean Child*, George Almar's *The Rover Bride*, Isaac Harby's *Alberti Contadini*, *The Last of the Abruzzi*, and Selby's farce, *Hunting a Turtle*.

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Keeley, the next stars to arrive, made their début in William Bernard's *Lucille, or The Story of a Heart* and Thomas Bayly's *The Swiss Cottage, or Why Don't She Marry*, pieces which had been written expressly for them. Mrs. Shaw joined the Keeleys on January 18 in *Agnes de Verne*, and the trio continued with *The Rivals* and *Wild Oats*. The visitors featured standard comedies and farces, but for their benefit on January 30, "the largest ever witnessed here," they presented *The Yeoman's Daughter*, a domestic drama by T. J. Serle.

Balls returned on January 31 in *Englishmen in India*. The next night A. A. Adams made his New Orleans début in *Virginius*. On February 2 Mr. and Mrs. Barnes and Charlotte Barnes commenced a brief engagement and for the next few nights alternated with Adams. Mrs. Shaw assisted the tragedian and also performed with the Barneses in *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (Donna Octavia). She appeared with Balls, on February 13, in J. Barnett's comedy, *Win Her and Woo Her*, and in *Black Eyed Susan*, and on the 15th she gave *Hamlet* as her farewell presentation. Commented a gentleman in the *Louisiana Courier* of February 13: "The usurpation of the breeches by the petticoat is not only in bad taste but deteriorates from the delicacy which we always associate with lovely women."

The night after her farewell performance Mrs. Shaw returned to assist Caldwell in the first two performances of the short engagement which he now commenced. On the 18th Mrs. H. Cramer made her American début as Lady Teazle to Caldwell's Charles Surface and on the 20th she was Juliana to his Duke

<sup>6</sup> The comparison of the casts of the two productions shows them to have been the same. It is possible, of course, that Bannister made some alterations in the play before the Philadelphia presentation.

Aranza (*The Honey Moon*). The Barnes family assisted on the 21st when Caldwell took his farewell of the stage as Gossamer. The afterpiece, *High Life Below Stairs*, was excellently cast with Balls as the Lord Duke, Finn as Lovell, Latham as Sir Harry, and Miss Melton as Mrs. Kitty.

James Wallack opened on February 22 with Jerrold's *The Hazard of the Die* and *The Wolf and The Lamb*. He next appeared as Rolla to the Elvira of Mrs. Bannister, Don Felix to the Violante of Mrs. Shaw (*The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret*), and Shylock to the Portia of Mrs. Cramer. At his benefit, on March 1, William Abbott volunteered to play Romeo to his Mercutio and Mrs. Cramer's Juliet, and Farren came over from the Camp Street Theatre to assist as Prince Bianchi in *The Brigand*.

March 2 saw the première of James Rees' new melodrama, *The Unknown, or The Demon's Gift*. A communication in the *Louisiana Courier* of March 3 tells all that is known of the play. "Some of the incidents are truly terrific," reported this writer, "in fact the whole piece is a compound of horrors, such as the superstitious gave to the character of the Germans of the fourteenth century."

With the arrival of Celeste on March 7 melodrama and the dance dominated the bills at the St. Charles. Celeste performed every night but two during the month, yet not until the 21st did she offer a new piece. This was Bishop's adaptation of Auber's opera, *Le Dieu et La Bayadère*, and it held the stage until her departure. On her benefit night it was preceded by *Yelva, The Orphan of Russia*, a drama from the French of Scribe.

Mrs. Pritchard reappeared on April 1. In addition to her familiar roles she now played Hazzi Lotzo in a new drama, *The White Eagle*; the Widow Cheerly; Paul in *The Wandering Boys*; and at her benefit on the 10th, Isabella in Buckstone's domestic drama, *Isabella, or a Woman's Life*, and Mrs. G. in Morris Barnett's farce of that name. Her husband appeared with her on this last night.

The most successful engagements of the season were in opera. Early in April Signor Brichta's Italian Company came from Havana for a two months' run. In the troupe were Signoras Pantanelli, Marozzi, and Papanti; Signors Candi, Ceresini, Badioli, Pantanelli, Ravaglia, Orlandi, and Fornasari. They gave Bellini's *Montrechi e Capuletti* for their first performance on April 4 and

thereafter appeared regularly on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays till the end of the season. Repetitions of the opening opera were frequent as were performances of the new scores: Rossini's *Semiramide* and *Il Tancredi*, Mercadante's *Donna Caritea*, and Rica's *Chiara di Rosemberg*, "first time in America."

The following critique, found in the *Bee* in April 9, is typical of many that appeared at this time.

Last evening . . . we passed a couple of hours in a transport of delight: music, more eloquent and full of meaning than words, and voices more sweet and flexible than the carol of the nightingale, or the lute of Apollo, thrilled our soul. . . . Indeed such a feast has never been before served to the public of this city—and they will be the losers not to partake of it largely.

The Barnes family returned on the 11th in *The Belle's Stratagem* and *The Somnambulist*. On the 15th Charlotte Barnes' dramatization of Joseph Inghram's *Lafitte* was produced "in a style of unsurpassing magnificence." With the arrival of Celeste on the 18th this engagement was interrupted and the trio did not appear again until the 24th.

Master Burke made his bow on that date in the afterpiece, *The March of Intellect*. On the 27th he played Romeo to the Juliet of Miss Barnes, Barton appearing as Mercutio. For her last performance on May 1 Miss Barnes offered a novelty, *Jemmy Twitcher in France, or Mobb the Outlaw*. A few nights later Burke bade farewell including among his pieces Moncrieff's *Old Heads on Young Shoulders* which he had introduced on April 29.

Barton initiated the benefit season on May 6 with *Reuben Glenroy* and *His First Champagne* by William Rede. Mrs. Shaw, who had begun another engagement on April 3, played Rosalie Somers to his Reuben. Miss Melton's benefit on the 11th presented another novelty, Douglas Jerrold's *The Wedding Gown, or The Exiled Pole*. Bannister brought out two of his new pieces on the 13th, a tragedy, *England's Iron Days*, and a local burletta, *Life in New Orleans*. He was assisted in the latter by "Old Corn Meal", a Negro vendor whose cries had long been familiar to citizens of New Orleans. In Bannister's piece he appeared on the stage with his horse and cart and sang, so the notices say, his celebrated songs of "Fresh Corn Meal." The performance proved successful enough to warrant repetition at Radcliffe's benefit on the 16th though some objected to the introduction of a Negro on

the stage.<sup>7</sup> An odd mixture of entertainments was featured on Williams' night. The bill, which began with *The Scottish Chief*, continued with a French vaudeville, *La Carte à Payer*, presented by M. Victorin, and a Grand War Dance by Indian chiefs and warriors in full war costume.

The last two weeks of the season brought only familiar pieces and the operas of the Italian troupe. On June 2 the theatre was turned over to the amateurs who gave a benefit for the relief of destitute widows and children. It should be noted that on this evening Caldwell reappeared as Jeremy Diddler to Mrs. Shaw's Peggy in *Raising the Wind* and that Mrs. Duff, also a volunteer, was Emily to Mrs. Shaw's Corinia and Miss Melton's Patty in the afterpiece, *Frightened to Death*. Two nights later a performance of Donizetti's *Parisina* brought the season to a close.

#### CHAPTER VIII

##### THE SEASON OF 1837-1838

###### AMERICAN THEATRE, 1837-1838

The American Theatre opened November 16, 1837, for what was to be the last season under the management of Richard Russell. It had been handsomely redecorated during the summer and now presented "an air of lightness and elegance well suited to its size and proportion."

The company which Russell had assembled included Messrs. Farren, F. S. Hill, Johnson, Larkin, E. Judah, Madden, George Clarke, Eversull, Kelly, Foster, and Sam Cowell, Mesdames Russell, Minnich, Foster, and Madden, and Misses Russell, Randolph, and Louisa Johnson, a dancer. F. S. Hill was stage manager; J. Cowell, Jr., chief artist; and Graham treasurer.

Information concerning the first ten weeks of the season is scarce and can be derived only from scattered editorial paragraphs and critiques in the newspapers. From these we learn that Charles B. Parsons opened an engagement as Othello on November 20, assisted by "the charming Miss Russell" as Desdemona. Apparently Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lewis arrived within the next few days, for the *Louisiana Courier* of December 1 refers to their performance in *The Black Brig of Bermuda* on the previous night. Reference is also made to an O'Connell who "nimble danced the Sailor's Hornpipe which saved him from

<sup>7</sup> *Louisiana Courier*, May 15, 1837.

being masticated in the Pacific." According to the *Louisiana Courier* of the 13th, "O'Connell the Tattooed or Robinson Crusoe II" had been shipwrecked on an island inhabited by cannibals who, charmed by "his grace, agility, and refined method of capering on the light fantastic toe," had spared his life.

A communication in the *Louisiana Courier* of the 19th throws additional light on Russell's activities during the early part of the season. The writer was indignant that the theatre "with its exhibition of 'wonderful dogs,' many monkeys, tattooed men . . . and other buffoonery" should attract crowded houses while the sterling plays at the St. Charles were witnessed by comparatively meagre audiences. He concluded with the hope that a "most beggarly 'account of empty boxes' may grace the 'little Camp' until the manager is induced to dispense entirely with his canine and mountebank auxiliaries." This communication suggests that Messrs. Cony and Blanchard and their dogs Hector and Bruin filled an engagement at this time, appearing in the same pieces which they offered later in January, *The Cherokee Chief*, or *The Dogs of the Wreck*, and *The Ourang Outang and His Double*.

Parsons made his last appearance on December 18 and was succeeded by Mrs. Maeder (the former Clara Fisher). Her Letitia Hardy was not adequately supported, declared the *Bee* of the 21st, but the lady herself showed "nothing of the feebleness" which was reported to have "rendered her personations wholly unequal to their former sprightliness." Mrs. Maeder, we note, was all of twenty-six. When Miss Russell left for Natchez about this time, Mrs. Maeder assumed the leads. She introduced two new pieces: William Collier's *Kate Kearney* and Oxberry's melodrama, *Matteo Falcone, the Youthful Brigand*.

January, 1838, brought the comedian John Sefton in his celebrated role of Jemmy Twitcher in *The Golden Farmer*. The night after his arrival Mr. and Mrs. Lewis bade farewell, offering "for the second time" Henry Coleman's new nautical drama, *The Scourge of the Ocean*. Mrs. Lewis' five-year-old daughter, "La Petite Bertha," danced a sailor's hornpipe; Mrs. Lewis delivered an address written expressly for the occasion and dedicated to the firemen of New Orleans; and Sefton again enacted Jemmy Twitcher. The comedian continued after their departure, presenting in the course of his engagement several novelties, Buckstone's *John Jones*, Poole's *Uncle Sam*, Bernard's *The Man About*

Town, and Peake's melodrama, *The Climbing Boy*. At Mrs. Maeder's benefit on the 15th he acted with the beneficiary in Buckstone's new drama, *A Dream of the Future*, and in *The Barrack Room*.

The next star was "Yankee" Hill who opened on January 13 in *The Forest Rose* and *The Yankee Pedlar*, or *Old Times in Virginia*, a new piece written by Bernard. Other novelties given during this engagement of eight nights were Bernard's *Speculation*, or *Major Wheeler in Europe*, H. A. Buckingham's *Peaceful Pelton*, the *Vermonters*, and *A Day in France*, or *the Yankee at Calais*, a piece not yet acted in the East.

The next two weeks brought a return of Cony and Blanchard, and "the wonderful dogs", and on the 29th came the Ravel Family. On February 8 Miss Russell, now Mrs. George P. Farren, made her first appearance since her return from Natchez. She played Julia in *The Hunchback*, her husband taking the part of Master Walter.

Two popular novelties were now brought forward: *The Love Chase*, a new comedy by Sheridan Knowles, and *Life in New York*, or *The Major's Come*, announced as the work of George Farren. An extravaganza by this name having Major Jack Downing as the leading character had been given at the Bowery Theatre in 1834 when Farren was stage manager there, and undoubtedly this was merely an alteration of the earlier work. For this production Cowell had prepared a view of North River with steamers and as these approached the landing, national airs were introduced. The effect was said to be "thrilling."

Another visitor was Mrs. Bailey who came out on February 21 in *The Spoiled Child*. This charming young vocalist appeared in vaudeville and musical farces such as *The Swiss Cottage* and *Charles II*. A "little Miss Brittingham" was announced for the 24th in *All Is Happy*, a new piece said to have been written expressly for her. She repeated the role several times within the next month and was given a benefit on April 18.

Sefton returned on February 27 and from then until the middle of March he appeared in the roles of his earlier engagement and as Prince Prettyman in *He Is Not Amiss* and as Magnus Lobb in Buckstone's farce, *The Two Queens*.

March brought several visitors. T. D. Rice began an engagement on the 4th, introducing during his stay *Jim Crow in London*, *Black and White*, and *The Peacock and the Crow* by J. Parry. On the 12th Charles Parsons returned and Charles Plumer, the new recruit, made his first appearance. This vocalist had been at the St. Charles in February and had won favor with his performances in musical afterpieces. Mrs. Duff joined Parsons in *Bertram* on the 13th and their presentation of *Othello*, *Adelgitha*, and the standard plays, attracted large houses. "Thus evincing," commented the press, "that the legitimate drama will be patronized, notwithstanding all the slang-whagery about our perverted taste."

One of the most popular of the season's novelties was *Nick of the Woods*, a dramatization of Robert Montgomery Bird's novel by G. W. Harby. The author had given the play to Parsons in December and the actor had brought it out in Natchez sometime during the following month.<sup>1</sup> Its reception in New Orleans is described in a communication to the *Daily Picayune* of March 20: "To say it was successful would be too tame a praise; it was on its first presentation received with deafening applause." Noted the *Louisiana Courier* of March 19: "The alterations of Harby in plot and character produce a greater effect than is portrayed in the novel; in fact, he has taken but the germ from Dr. Bird; the tree and all its branches are the produce of his own genius and imagination."

By the last of March the visiting stars had departed and the company prepared to take their benefits. Charles Plumer offered two melodramas new to the city: Morris Barnett's *The Spirit of the Rhine* and George Pitt's *The Last Nail*. Judah's night brought *The Widow's Curse* by J. B. Phillips and *The Black Dwarf*, also a new melodrama. Foster's benefit on April 3 was not without its novelty—the exhibition of a fire escape between pieces.

On April 6 Madden brought out his own play, *The Triumph of Texas, or The Plains of San Jacinto*. The announcement of the performance stated that Colonel William H. Wharton, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from The Republic of Texas to the United States, would attend. Mrs. Carr's offering was Thomas Wilk's drama, *The Death Token, or The Fatal Gift*, given now "for the first time in America."

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Picayune*, February 9, 1838.

The return of the Ravels on the 8th interrupted the benefits. They were resumed on the 16th when F. S. Hill offered his *Six Degrees of Crime* and his new piece, *The School of Ten Quakers*. Larkin on his night introduced *Rory O'More, or The Rebellion of 1798*, a dramatization of Samuel Lover's novel. It was reported that the officers and members of the St. Patrick Hibernian Society together with the whole Irish population of the city intended to witness the performance.

The season came to a close with Miss Russell's benefit on April 29. Miss DeBar, formerly of the St. Charles, appeared on this night as Lisette in *The Swiss Cottage* and as Catherine in *A Husband at Sight*.

SUMMER SEASON, 1838

The theatre reopened on May 5 "for a limited period of light and elegant entertainment adapted to the season." The announcement of the opening performance, *L'Auberge des Adrets, or Why Don't She Marry and No!*, listed several new names: Mrs. Charles Plumer, Miss DeBar, and Miss E. Randolph. Joe Cowell, Sr. apparently joined the troupe soon after this; the notice of May 11 lists him as Wormwood in *The Lottery Ticket*, "his third appearance."

An engagement with the Barnes family and Harrison brought a change in the repertoire. Musical trifles and farces were relegated to the background while the visitors presented *The School for Scandal*, *The Rivals*, and *Othello*. For her farewell benefit on May 19 Miss Barnes announced her own play, *Octavia Bragaldi*.

The 19th found the theatre closed, however, for early that morning Richard Russell had died.<sup>2</sup> Just two weeks before, on May 7, he had laid the cornerstone of the new theatre which he intended to open in the fall.<sup>3</sup> After his death the plans were abandoned and later the first German Theatre in New Orleans was built on the site.<sup>4</sup>

F. S. Hill and Graham, the treasurer, now assumed the management of the theatre as Russell's lease did not expire until June 1. The Barnes family presented *Octavia Bragaldi* when the

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, May 20, 1838.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, May 6, 1838.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, November 14, 1838.

theatre opened on May 21; a repetition of the play on the 23rd was followed by *Personation* with Harrison as Lord Henry and Miss Barnes as Lady Julia. They appeared also in *A Bold Stroke for a Husband*, *The Love Chase*, and *The Wedding Day*. On the 30th, as Mrs. Plumer's benefit, Mrs. Duff enacted Florinda to the Pescara of Pearson in *The Apostate*. For her own benefit the following night she appeared as Mrs. Haller. This was announced as "positively the last night of the season," but when Caldwell offered Hill the use of the house for two more nights, the theatre reopened. On June 3 the company gave its last performance.

## THE NEGRO THEATRE, 1838

In the winter of 1838 an attempt was made to establish a theatre for the free people of color. Unfortunately the evidence concerning the project is so limited that it is impossible to say how far the enterprise was carried.

The *Council de Ville* of the Third Municipality at its meeting on February 14 passed a resolution permitting the establishment of the theatre, and this we find printed in the *Daily Picayune* on the 24th.

Resolved: That permission be granted E. V. Mathieu, free man of color, to establish a theatre in the Third Municipality for free people of color; that said theatre be exempt from the taxes imposed on cabarets, taverns, and ball rooms, provided the director of said theatre shall furnish a box, free of charge for the use of the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Secretary of the Council of this Municipality. . . .

On the 28th of February the *Daily Picayune* noted, in what is our last reference to the project, that the theatre was "to go ahead."

## ST. CHARLES THEATRE, 1837-1838

The company for the St. Charles Theatre arrived early in October of 1837, as Caldwell planned to open "the temple" on the 9th. He had not reckoned, however, with the yellow fever epidemic which was still raging in the city and when several of his actors became seriously ill, he was forced to postpone the opening until October 16th.

The troupe had suffered many losses since last season; notable among the missing were H. J. Finn, W. H. Latham, Mr. and Mrs. Bannister, Mrs. Henry Hunt, and Miss Melton. The

personnel now included Messrs. H. G. Pearson, Barton, Schinotti, Williams, Paret, Lewis, Page, DeBar, Raylea, Carr, C. W. Hunt, Alexander Pickering, Porter, William Hield, Collins, Daugherty, Archer, Huntley, Lewis, and Pacand; Mesdames Conduit, Vincent, Carr, Hield, Cramer, Pierce, and Chambers; and Misses Jones, DeBar, and Chester. The ballet leader was Mons. Barbieri; Messrs. Jackson, Davis, and Miss Hanker were solo dancers. Barton was stage manager, and John Watson, music director.

The familiar pieces of the first week served to introduce most of the newcomers. The opening bill of *No Song, No Supper* and *Perfection* featured Mrs. Conduit, the new comedy lead, as Margaretta and Kate O'Brien. Mrs. Conduit's beauty and talent won instant favor and she was pronounced "decidedly superior to the melodious automata which usually warble on our stage." Charles was played by Porter, the young son of J. G. Porter, a former manager of the Walnut Theatre in Philadelphia. Between the play and the farce the dancers gave a comic ballet entitled "L'Amour." Commented the *Bee* (October 18): "The ballet was not wretched and that is saying a great deal." This season dances rather than overtures were featured between pieces and before long critics began to speak enthusiastically of the *danseuse*, Miss Hanker.

Alexander Pickering made his bow on the second night as Darby in *The Poor Soldier*, Mrs. Conduit appearing as Patrick. These two were the chief attraction until Mr. and Mrs. Hield came out on October 23 as Julian St. Pierre and Mariana in *The Wife*. This couple had but recently recovered from an attack of yellow fever and even now Hield was said to be "yet too weak to do full justice to his powers." As supporting characters in *The Wife* Pickering and Porter continued to win favor. Reported the *Bee* on the 25th: "Porter possesses a great merit, the more conspicuous in a young man, he does not tear a 'passion to tatters', nor strut before the audience like a victorious game cock." The 25th brought the first novelty of the season, Mrs. Planché's farce, *The Pleasant Neighbor*. The following night the attraction was *King Lear* with Barton and Mrs. Hield in the leads. On the 27th Holland made the first of several appearances. His third was as Morisseau in the local première of Buckstone's drama, *The Duchess of Vaubalière*.

Comedy featuring Holland and tragedy with Barton and Mrs. Hield were now offered on alternate nights. On November 5,

Miss DeBar, a favorite of the 1836 season, returned to the scene of her American début as Yourekee in *Peter Wilkins*. H. G. Pearson made his appearance on the 7th as Shylock to the Portia of Mrs. Cramer. On the following night he was Macduff to Hield's Macbeth and on the 13th he played the lead in *The Wrecker's Daughter*, a play of Sheridan Knowles new to the city.

The first star of the season was George Barrett, the light comedian. He commenced his engagement on the 14th as Charles Surface, Mrs. Cramer enacting Lady Teazle and Miss Pierce, Mrs. Candor. Thereafter he went through a round of familiar pieces, introducing one new farce, *The Barrack Room* by Thomas Bayly. On the 21st *La Bayadère* was revived with Mons. Barbieri as Zelica and Miss Hanker as Fatima. This *danseuse* had at last overcome the timidity which had earlier displeased the critics and her performance was declared to be "little inferior to Celeste's." Mrs. Vincent (Zulma), who had been unpopular with the press since her first appearance at the beginning of the season, was again subjected to criticism. Southern chivalry seems to have been lacking where this actress was concerned. Her dancing in *La Bayadère*, however, forced a compliment from the critic of the *Daily Picayune* (November 23). "But," he added, "she is deplorably thin and dresses in very bad taste." The Hields appeared in the New Orleans première of Talfourdi's *Ion*, on the 29th, and, as usual, won praise for their just conception of the parts.

James H. Hackett opened on December 3 in *Monsieur Mallet* and *The Kentuckian*. James R. Scott, the American tragedian, was introduced on the 5th in *Richard III*, and two nights later Mrs. Sharpe began a short engagement in *Fazio*. Aided by the new arrivals Hackett presented one of the latest and most popular of his roles, that of Falstaff in *Henry IV*. This was a three act version of the play, but one which, according to the notices, "preserved the historical connection in all the scenes in which either Falstaff, the Prince (Barrett), or Hotspur (J. R. Scott) appear." The other new role in which Hackett appeared during this visit was that of Galbraith in Charles Dance's dramatization of *Horse-shoe Robinson*. Mrs. Sharpe had Scott's assistance in *Macbeth* and Barrett, now announced as "re-engaged," played with her in the comedies. Her benefit night, December 18, saw the third rendition of *Henry IV* and a performance of *Lucille* with Barton as St. Cyr to her Lucille.

After Barrett's departure on the 23rd the management brought out the play which it had been unable to present in its entirety the last season, *The Jewess*. A hundred supernumeraries took part in it and the magnificence of the spectacle drew crowded houses on ten consecutive nights. It was followed by other novelties: Buckstone's domestic drama, *Ellen Warham*; Barrymore's melodrama, *Trial by Battle*; *The Courier of the Ocean*; and *The Battle of Austerlitz*, a drama founded on a period in the life of Napoleon.

The most important star of the season was "glorious Ellen Tree" who came for an engagement of twelve nights. She was at this time one of the greatest drawing cards in the country, and Mrs. Bailey (formerly Miss Charlotte Watson) and Plumer, vocalists who had commenced an engagement on January 9, were forced to step aside for her. The star made her debut as Julia assisted by J. R. Scott as Master Walter and Barton as Sir Thomas Clifford. Of the performance the *Louisiana Courier* (January 13) spoke kindly but not enthusiastically. The first part of the play was said to have dragged and not until her reproof of Helen in the third act did the actress show her "whole powers." "We waited for this difficult passage as a criterion of her merit," acknowledged the critic, "for since the days of the lamented Jane Placide we have never before known it to be given naturally."

"Fashionable houses" witnessed her personations of Marianna (*The Wife*), Lady Teazle, Ion (three times), Pauline (*The Ransome*), Mrs. Haller, the youthful Queen, Marian (*The Wrecker's Daughter*), Lady Macbeth, Letitia Hardy, Catharine, and Lady Townly (*The Provoked Husband*). Scott won fresh laurels at her support in the tragedies, but the choice of Barton, "a gentleman declining into the vale of years," for characters unsuited to his ability caused general dissatisfaction. Public expression of this feeling may have been partly responsible for Barton's decision to retire from the stage at the conclusion of Miss Tree's engagement. He appeared at her benefit as Lord Townly and when he said farewell on January 27, she played with him in *The Jealous Wife* and *A Day After the Wedding*.

Mrs. Bailey and Plumer returned after Miss Tree's departure for five more nights of song. On the 29th Miss Josephine Clifton made her bow in N. P. Willis' *Bianca Visconti*, a tragedy written expressly for her the year before. Her engagement, like that of

Ellen Tree's, was reported to be "highly successful." Especially well received was the second tragedy which she introduced, *The Genoese* by Epes Sargent. Her chief support during this visit must have been Hield or Pearson. Scott's name is linked with hers only in the notices of *Venice Preserved* (January 31) and *Pizarro* (February 2). On February 5 the management announced his benefit and last appearance.

Ellen Tree began another engagement on February 12, but after two performances illness forced a postponement. Caldwell immediately filled in the breach with Barrett, Plumer, and Mrs. Watson, the stepmother of Mrs. Bailey. The comedies and farces of "Gentleman George" and the operatic pieces of Plumer and Mrs. Watson comprised the bills until Miss Tree reappeared two weeks later. Several of her roles were new; assisted by Barrett she enacted the heroine in *The Love Chase* of Sheridan Knowles, *Twelfth Night*, and *Court Favors*. With Hield she appeared in *Antony and Cleopatra* presented now "for the first time in America." The play attracted one of the best houses of the season and was repeated the following night. Apparently this was Hield's last performance at the St. Charles. His wife had made her last appearance on March 14 when she enacted Hamlet and Lady Margaret in *Wallace the Hero of Scotland*.

Master St. Luke, "the youthful Paganini," and his father, "the original imitator of Paganini," succeeded Miss Tree. The press described their offering, *Il Fanatico per la Musica* of Mayer, as "a most decided failure." Fortunately the St. Charles had other attractions. Mrs. Gibbs, who had been a member of the company in 1836, began an engagement on March 12, and Barrett continued to perform. Then, too, there were the Indian warriors who visited the theatre on the 14th and again on the 24th. Miss Clifton returned on the 29th for four nights of comedy with Barrett and at her benefit; Scott reappeared to play opposite her in *The Wife*.

Two new native plays were introduced at this time. Of *The Squatter* by James Rees we know nothing except that the scene was laid partly in Virginia and partly in Illinois. A critique in the *Daily Picayune*, April 3, complains of the mistreatment the piece had received at the hands of the actors. The writer thought the plot and dialogue were well written and if properly acted, the play would become popular. The second of these novelties was

*The Deceived*, a domestic drama by G. W. Harby. Information concerning it is limited to the comment in the *Louisiana Courier* of April 14: "It is a sorrowing tale, well told."

The theatre remained closed on April 4 while the artists completed the preparation for *Gustavus, or The Masked Ball*. The management announced that the pit was to be floored over and a public masquerade ball would conclude the bill every evening during the run of the spectacle. Notwithstanding a cool reception from the press the novelty drew crowded houses and was given nightly until Barrett, the *Gustavus* of the play, concluded his engagement on the 12th.

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Cowell now arrived and performed every night until the end of the season. With them was their daughter, Sidney Cowell, who later became famous as Mrs. Bateman, the author of *Self*. During this engagement she made her "first appearance on any stage", enacting Emily Worthington in *The Poor Gentleman*, Emma in *A Chip of the Old Block*, Eliza in *Paul Pry*, and Emily Tempest in *The Wheel of Fortune*.

The benefits this season brought little in the way of novelty. That for the Orphan Boys' Asylum on April 21 was signalized by the appearance of Mrs. Duff in *The Foundling of the Forest* and of Thomas Bishop in *The Turnpike Gate*. An interesting feature of C. W. Hunt's night was the presentation of the new dramatic sketch, *The Pickwickians*, with Joe Cowell as the Fat Boy. Barton returned to the stage on April 29 to play Penruddock in *The Wheel of Fortune* and with this benefit the season came to an end.

VAUXHALL GARDEN, ST. CHARLES THEATRE

The theatre reopened on June 6 under the direction of George Holland. The advertisement in the *Louisiana Courier* of this date describes the alterations which had converted the interior of the St. Charles Theatre into Vauxhall Garden: "The Pit is covered over and formed into walks, bowers, seats, a fountain of water, grotto, saloon, etc., the whole forming a novel and pleasant appearance, calculated to pass a cool evening free from ennui or blue devils." The entertainments were to consist of vocal and instrumental music, phantasmagoria exhibitions, and on "gala nights", light vaudevilles.

The first dramatic performance on record is *The Dumb Belle* given on June 18. From the daily notices appearing in

the *Louisiana Courier* of this week we learn that connected with the establishment were Signor Cioffi, director of music, Mrs. De-Bar (formerly Mrs. Conduit), Page, Old Cowell, Holland, and the dancers, Miss Hanker and Davis. No mention is made of other performers.

On July 12 Vauxhall Garden closed with a variety of entertainment for the benefit of George Holland. The newspapers report that the establishment had been well patronized by the most respectable citizens.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SEASON 1838-1839

#### AMERICAN THEATRE, 1838-1839

The theatre on Camp Street opened on October 21, 1838, under the direction of George H. Barrett. It is not known what agreement existed between Caldwell and Barrett, but the fact that actors from the St. Charles sometimes acted at the Camp Street Theatre suggests that Barrett managed the smaller theatre for Caldwell and was not a lessee. The house had new decorations, "after the design and execution of J. Cowell," and a new drop curtain painted by the Italian artists, Ceresa and Pinoli. Barrett had secured an excellent company which included Mrs. George Barrett, Mr. and Mrs. John Greene, W. S. Fredericks, John Mills Brown, and W. F. Johnson. Among the other members were Messrs. Hodges, Thomas Fielding, William Sefton, Franklin, David, Huntley, Price, Pacaud, Austin, Kirkland, Byers, Marks, Easterman, G. Lewis, Harris, Keppell, and Gilbert, Mesdames F. Browne, Price, Hall, Anderson, Monell, and Misses McIntyre, Lewis, Wallis, Sidney Cowell, and Wray, a *danseuse*.

The leader of the orchestra was Mr. T. Jackson; J. Cowell was chief artist; Sewell, scene painter; Varden, machinist, and Huntley, prompter. Admission to the parquet was \$1.00; seats in the private boxes, \$1.50; and gallery \$.50. During the first months of the season the doors opened at six-thirty and the curtain rose at seven.

The opening bill consisted of Bulwer's *Lady of Lyons* and Buckstone's domestic drama, *Presumptive Evidence*. Barrett could not have made a better selection in which to show the strength of his company. Bulwer's play won instant favor; it was repeated twice during the first week and before the end of

the season had achieved a record run. *The Gambler's Fate*, revived on the second night, was also successful though it never attained the popularity of *The Lady of Lyons*. On the third night Mrs. Barrett appeared as Thérèse to Fredericks' Carwin, and with her husband played in *The Dumb Belle* and *33 John Street*. Mrs. Barrett was capable of enacting any role and during this season she was to play such diversified leads as Julia in *The Hunchback*, Mary Copp in *Charles II*, Kate O'Brien in *Perfection*, Morgiana in *The Forty Thieves*, and Desdemona.

W. F. Johnson made his first appearance on the 26th as Lord Priory in *Wives as They Were*, following it the next night with Captain Copp (*Charles II*) and Sir Lawrence Paragon (*Perfection*). This actor was an admirable representative of old men and had long been a favorite in Boston. *She Stoops to Conquer*, on November 3, introduced John Mills Brown, another excellent comedian from Boston. Fielding rejoined the troupe on the 11th, making his bow as Beausant in *The Lady of Lyons*. The after-piece on this date was Thomas Bayly's burletta, *The Ladder of Love*.

Editorial comments in the *Daily Picayune* testify as to the excellence of the performances during these first weeks. From the same source we learn that the "little Camp" had now become a fashionable resort like the St. Charles. Barrett had stated in the first announcement of the season that he would maintain order and decorum at the theatre and to achieve his purpose he had secured the support of an "enlightened police under the direction of Mr. Cottam." A note in the *Daily Picayune* of November 3 tells of Barrett's success: "We dropped into this (now fashionable) Theatre last night. . . . All the private boxes were occupied by beautiful women, while the parquet shone with their charms. We cannot express our gratitude at seeing the rapid approaches of this theatre to a high and honorable place in the ranks of the drama."

Little Miss Meadows arrived on November 19 to sing, dance, and perform in familiar plays. A more important star made his début on the 25th in a revival of *Mazeppa*, which after two months of preparation was now presented with "entire new scenery, dresses, and decorations." The star was the celebrated horse Mazeppa and his chief support was furnished by Mrs. Greene and Ben DeBar of the St. Charles company. Sol Smith recalls that DeBar played Mazeppa in the St. Charles Theatre,

"doing his own riding up the 'runs' and periling his life every night for \$18 per week."<sup>1</sup> Smith must refer to these performances at the Camp; however, if the horse was as sagacious and docile as the notices proclaim, DeBar can have been in little danger.

The next visitor was Dan Marble, who opened on December 3 in *The Forest Rose* and *Black Eyed Susan*. During his stay he appeared in four pieces which had not been previously acted in New Orleans: E. H. Thompson's *Sam Patch*, N. H. Bannister's *The Bush Whacker*, C. A. Logan's *Vermont Wool Dealer*, and J. P. Adams' *The Maiden's Vow*, or *The Yankee in Time*.

On the 18th came Miss Nelson in *The Love Chase*. Her second, and presumably only other, role during this short engagement was that of Custace in Sheridan Knowles' drama, *Woman's Wit*.

Madame Lecompte, the dancer, and her husband, "the distinguished singer," succeeded Miss Nelson. In the announcement for *La Bayadère* on December 21 are listed Miss Turnbull, a member of their troupe, Madame Thielman of the St. Charles, and Mrs. Bennie. After a run of six nights *La Bayadère* made way for Sheridan Knowles' *Maid of Mariendorpt*, a drama which had had its American première in New York the previous night. On the 31st Mons. Martin joined the dancers and with his help they presented the grand operatic ballet, *La Sylphide*. Archer came over from the St. Charles to take the part of Hela.

The entertainment on New Year's night included a revival of Noah's *She Would Be a Soldier* with Marble as Jerry Mayflower and Mrs. Greene as Christine. Though announced "for this night only," Marble remained for three more performances of the play. On the "glorious eighth of January," the Louisiana Riflemen and the Louisiana Dragoons were special guests at a bill made up of Noah's play and Pilson's *He Would Be a Soldier*.

Barrett relied on standard plays and good acting rather than on novelties. On January 12 he offered *Macbeth* with Fredericks and Mrs. Greene as the principals. Cast as the three witches were the mainstays of his comic force, Johnson, Brown, and Greene. Another successful revival was that of *The Forty Thieves* which served as an afterpiece for four consecutive nights.

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, 156.

A novelty was *The Water Witch, or The Skimmer of the Sea*,<sup>2</sup> presented on the 19th. A recent farce by Charles Mathews, Jr., *Truth, or A Glass Too Much*, served as the curtain raiser for the benefit given Thomas Williamson on the 22nd. The beneficiary himself appeared as Duke Dorgan in *Presumptive Evidence* and sang several songs. He had been a popular member of the Camp Street company in 1835 and 1836, but according to the *Daily Picayune* (December 29) he had not been able to secure an engagement this season.

Edwin Forrest began an engagement on January 28, playing Othello "to the largest house the Camp ever had." His subsequent roles, except for that of Claude Melnotte, were those in which he had often appeared. After his fourth performance a critic in the *True American* (February 4) expressed the opinion that his style of acting had greatly improved. "There is less display of his unmatched muscular talent," remarked the writer, "and more effort to produce effect by drawing upon the sympathy which nature elicits."

Josephine Clifton and J. R. Scott opened a joint engagement with *The Hunchback* on February 13. They appeared in *Macbeth* and in *Anne Boleyn*, a new tragedy of Fielding's which Miss Clifton had introduced earlier at the St. Charles. In this production Fielding played Henry VIII, Gilbert the Earl of Northumberland, Fredericks, Wolsey, and Mrs. Cowell, Selina. Young Burke joined the visiting performers on February 17, making his bow as Dennis Brulgruddery. He offered nothing new until his benefit on March 1 when he introduced Samuel Lover's *White Horse of the Peppers*.

Ellen Tree was the attraction during the last week in February. Her first appearance was *The Lady of Lyons* and *The Barrack Room*, J. R. Scott enacting Claude Melnotte and Barrett, De Crusae. The most popular of her presentations seem to have been *Twelfth Night* and *Romeo and Juliet* which she had not offered during an earlier engagement at the St. Charles. At her benefit on March 2, Barton came over from the St. Charles to play opposite her in *The Provoked Husband*.

<sup>2</sup> On the revival of this play in the fall, the *Daily Picayune*, November 20, 1839, attributed it to H. J. Finn. There are plays with the same title by R. P. Smith, C. W. Taylor, and J. S. Wallace.

Charles Eaton came on March 3 for five nights of tragedy. Scott was Othello to his Iago, Pierre to his Jaffier, and Marc Antony to his Cassius, Barton volunteering as Brutus. In the course of his last evening, March 8, Eaton delivered an address to the firemen of New Orleans and gave imitations of Forrest, Adams, Vandenhoff, Kemble, and Rice.

The Ravel Family during a two-day visit in late January had offered a pantomime in which they impersonated the Bedouin Arabs. On the night after Eaton's benefit the management introduced the "Real Bedouin Arabs." These visitors displayed their extraordinary powers in gymnastic feats and in *The Sheik of the Desert*, a grand eastern drama written expressly for them. On alternate nights Barrett featured James Porter, the Kentucky Giant, Major Stevens, the American Dwarf, and Miss Sutor, the German Dwarf, a trio that had won favor in New York several seasons before. Their repertoire consisted of David Garrick's burlesque, *Gulliver in Lilliput*; *Exiles in the West*; and *Nick of the Woods*. The latter was doubtless the Medina version of Robert Montgomery Bird's novel which had been introduced in New York with Porter as the original Ralph Stackpole.

The legitimate drama was not entirely neglected during these engagements. Scott and Mrs. Barrett presented *Town and Country* and *The Rent Day* at her benefit on the 12th, and after Scott's departure Fredericks and Mrs. Greene appeared in Jerrold's play. J. B. Booth commenced an engagement on the 20th, but he played to thin houses while the crowds flocked to the St. Charles to see Celeste. The press noticed Johnson's benefit bill, comprised of *Speed the Plough* and two recent farces, remarking that it was one of the most attractive of the season, but "whether it will draw a full house is another question."

The last two weeks of the season offered little of interest. Miss Nelson reappeared on the 30th for one night only. Fredericks' benefit presented Bulwer's new play, *The Dutchess de la Valliere*. On the Treasurer's night, Holland, Browne, Archer, Barton, and Scott came over from the St. Charles. Barton also appeared as Lieutenant Worthington at J. Mills Brown's benefit on April 7 and as Faulkland (*The Rivals*) at Barrett's benefit on the 8th, the last night of the season. Other volunteers from

the St. Charles were Holland who played David, J. S. Browne as Bob Acres, and Farren as Sir Anthony Absolute. Cast in the role of Mrs. Malaprop was Johnson, who, it was said, had played it with decided success at the Tremont in Boston.

The theatre reopened on the 29th when Mrs. Greene was given a complimentary benefit. The audience at her first benefit on April 7 had been small, but at this later date she had a "well filled and extremely fashionable house."

SUMMER SEASON, 1839

The citizens of New Orleans seemed reluctant to have the season end and Holland, realizing this, announced that on May 9 he would open the Camp Street Theatre, "for a few nights."

He promised dramatic entertainment and a grand exhibition imported from England at an immense expense and never before equalled in this country in the extent and magnificent development of its optical illusions. The price of admission to the parquet was \$1.00, to the boxes, \$.75. Doors opened at seven-thirty, and the curtain rose at eight.

The principal performers seem to have been Holland, Joe Cowell, young Sam Cowell, and Sidney Cowell. Their names are the only ones mentioned in the scattered advertisements which appeared in the *Daily Picayune*. They offered light comedies and farces, generally two an evening. The phantasmagoria illusions were reported to be capital. To attract a crowd on the last night, May 29, Holland held a lottery, the purchaser of each theatre ticket receiving a chance. There can be no question of Holland's shrewdness. The papers reported that the performances were given before a house "thronged from parquet to gallery."

ST. CHARLES THEATRE, 1838-1839

The St. Charles, "thoroughly renovated and improved," opened for the fourth season on October 1, 1838. The whole of the interior had been repainted and the chandelier taken to pieces and cleaned. Improvements had also been effected in the orchestra and in the company, both of which were now said to be "considerably increased in number and talent." Included among the players were Messrs. Harrison, George Farren, Charles Plumer, Ben DeBar, H. G. Pearson, Williams, Page, Porter, Archer, J. Cowell, Sam Cowell, Lewis, Burke, Naylor, and Paret, Mes-

dames Harrison, Farren, Plumer, DeBar, Thielman, Cioffi, Smith, and Cowell, and Misses Ravenot and Kerr, dancers. John Barton was acting manager; Pearson, stage manager; S. M. Lee, principal artist; and H. W. Jonas, leader of the orchestra.

Familiar farces and musical pieces comprised the bills of the first weeks. On the opening night Madame Thielman and Plumer were featured in *No Song, No Supper*; Mademoiselle Ravelot danced a *grand pas seul*; Cowell sang a comic song and then appeared with his wife in *The Dead Shot*. Sam Cowell made his bow on the 5th as Tom in *The Bath Road* and as Robin in *The Waterman*. Holland came out the following night in *The Secret* and appeared next in *Peter Wilkins*, assisted by Madame Thielman as Yourakee and Sam Cowell as Nondescript, a role which was turned over to DeBar when he arrived. On the 9th was presented the first novelty of the season, John Millingen's petite comedy, *Borrowed Feathers*.

Mrs. Farren and H. G. Pearson made their bows in *Thérèse* on the 10th and on the 12th were seen in *Town and Country*, Farren taking the part of Cosey. The operatic *John of Paris*, on the 17th, reintroduced Archer in the role of the Grand Chamberlain. On the 24th came Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, of the London and New York theatres. Harrison, it will be remembered, had supported Charlotte Barnes last season when she played at the Camp. The newcomers seem to have been equally at home in comedy, farce, melodrama, and tragedy. Early roles after their first appearance as William Tell and Albert and as Giles and Phoebe (*The Miller's Maid*) were young Heartall and Widow Cheerly, Charles II and Edward the Page (*Charles II*), and Antonio and Juliette (*The Mountain Devils*).

The first important novelty came on October 26, the dramatization of Bulwer's *Paul Clifford*, by Benjamin Webster. Within the next two weeks eight other new pieces were produced: Edward Fitzball's extravaganza, *Za Ze Zi Zo Zu*; Benjamin Webster's farce, *My Young Wife and My Old Umbrella*; Thomas Bayly's *Comfortable Service*; T. J. Serle's *The Ghost Story*; Charles Selby's *The Widow's Victim*; *Don John of Austria*; the petite comedy, *A Lesson in Love*; and Edward Fitzball's melodrama, *The Burgomaster's Daughter*, "first time in this country."

Joseph M. Field began a short engagement on November 15 with his new satirical sketch, *Victoria, or The Lion and the Kiss*.

This play and its sequel, *The White House, or All the Lions*, served as afterpieces to John Poole's *Atonement* when it had its American première on the 16th. Field gave his last performance on the 19th including on the bill his *Bennett in Texas* and a new satirical farce, *The Clouds, or Plato in Petticoats*.

The last of November brought another important novelty, *Esmeralda, or Quasimodo the Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Edward Fitzball. The melodrama received enthusiastic praise. According to the *Daily Picayune* (November 27), Harrison's Quasimodo was far superior to that of Henry Wallack and the Esmeralda of his wife was "an express and admirable performance."

The interest centered now in the new arrivals. Miss Meadows came out on the 28th in *The Four Mowbrays*, and on the next night the Barnes family began an engagement. On December 3, John R. Scott made his first appearance of the season opposite Charlotte Barnes in *The Wife*. As in the previous year Scott's engagement was a long one. He supported the visiting stars during their visits in December and January; later he played a short engagement at the Camp Street Theatre and then returned to the St. Charles where he remained until the end of the season. Another newcomer was James S. Browne, "from the London and New York Theatres," who made his bow as Rover in *Wild Oats* and as Jeremy Diddler in *Raising the Wind*. This actor, like Scott, seems to have been a temporary member of the company; he remained until late in April appearing nearly every night. His most popular personations were those of Robert Macaire in Charles Selby's play of that name introduced on January 6 and Sergeant Austerlitz in Mrs. Gore's *Maid of Croissy* presented later in the month.

The stately Miss Clifton was the next star, opening on the 18th in *The Lady of Lyons*. The cast included Scott as Claude Melnotte, Farren as General Damas, DeBar as Beauseant, and Mrs. Farren as the Widow Melnotte. In the presentation of *The School for Scandal*, on the 21st, her Lady Teazle was supported by the Charles Surface of James Browne and the Sir Peter of H. J. Finn, who had made his first appearance the previous night. The most popular of Miss Clifton's offerings was the tragedy, *Anne Boleyn*, which she introduced on the 27th. The author was Thomas Fielding of the Camp Street Theatre and the play was a hit both here and in New York where it was brought out in the

spring. Miss Clifton gave her last performance on January 3, appearing in *Anne Boleyn* and the farce, *The Lady and the Devil*, in which she was assisted by Browne and Finn.

In the hiatus before the arrival of the next visiting performers Browne and Finn were featured in Dance's new farces, *Naval Engagements* and *The Bengal Tiger*. These two comedians made an excellent combination and the pieces which they introduced during the two and a half months of Finn's engagement were among the most successful of the season.

The Firemen's Charitable Association was given a benefit on the 12th in grateful acknowledgment of the exertions of the Fire Department in saving the theatre from destruction on January 1. The fire had burned the gallery saloon and the ceiling of the box saloon but had not spread to the rest of the house.<sup>3</sup>

Miss Ellen Tree opened on January 16 in the popular *Lady of Lyons* and followed it with a range of characters made familiar by her visit of the previous season. Only her initial role and that of Meeta in *The Maid of Mariendorpt* were new. Caldwell returned to play opposite her in *Much Ado about Nothing*, *The School for Scandal*, and *The Honey Moon*. One critic was of the opinion that he played as well as he did when acting was his profession.<sup>4</sup>

The Ravel Family succeeded Ellen Tree, but "in consequence of Gabriel Ravel having met with some accident" they remained only two nights. Then, on February 5, came the old favorite Junius Brutus Booth, last seen here in 1829. His roles were those in which he had appeared many times at the Camp Street Theatre: Richard III, Sir Giles Overreach, Shylock, Othello, King Lear, Bertram, Hamlet, Lucius Junius Brutus, and Jerry Sneak. The *True American* of February 9 reported that he disappointed the largest audience of the season by his tame personation of Richard and not until his fourth appearance as Othello was he "himself again." From then until the end of the engagement on the 16th he was said to shine with his old lustre.

Mademoiselle Augusta, the thirteen-year-old daughter of Mrs. H. A. Williams, was the next attraction. Her dancing had created a sensation in New York the previous spring and she was said to rival the most renowned *artistes* of the day. She made her

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Picayune*, January 2, 1839.

<sup>4</sup> *True American*, February 4, 1839.

bow as Zoloe in *La Bayadère*, assisted by Miss Kerr and Mademoiselle Ravenot as Fatima and Zelica. This and the ballet pantomime entitled *The Twelve Pages of the Duke de Vendôme* were the only pieces she offered.

The Real Bedouin Arabs came to the St. Charles on the 24th and for several nights entertained with their gymnastic feats. Finn's benefit on the 25th introduced Captain Henry Addison's *Tam O'Shanter*, and Browne's on the 27th featured another novelty, J. R. Planché's *My Schoolfellow*. These performances were among Finn's last, for on March 5 his engagement came to an end.

March brought the inimitable Celeste in melodramas and spectacles. Her opening rôle in W. B. Bernard's *St. Mary's Eve* introduced her in her first speaking part. She repeated the favorites of the past seasons and in addition introduced the novelties: *The Spirit Bride*, *The Child of the Wreck* by Planché, and *The Star of the Forest*. The newspapers reported overflowing houses on each of her twenty-four nights, and at the conclusion of the engagement the *True American* (April 1) stated that she had drawn the extraordinary sum of \$30,000. Somewhat contradictory is the statement in the *Daily Picayune* of April 19 that she realized \$7,000 while the management lost \$900.

At Mademoiselle Ravenot's benefit on March 31 the juvenile prodigy, Miss Davenport, made her first and only appearance at the St. Charles. This young actress, "from the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane, and Haymarket," had arrived in the city ten days before and not being able to arrange an engagement at either of the American theatres had performed in the ballroom of the St. Louis Exchange. At the St. Charles she appeared in *Richard III* and in *The Manager's Daughter*, a protean comedy written for her by E. Lancaster. These were the pieces in which she had made her New Orleans début.

Edwin Forrest opened an engagement on April 1 in *Virginius*, Mrs. Barrett coming over from the Camp Street Theatre to play opposite him. Later in the engagement she appeared in *Richard III*, *Thérèse*, and *The Lady of Lyons* with him. He had excellent support during his stay. Mrs. Duff came out of her retirement to appear with him in *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Metamora*, *Damon and Pythias*, *Richard III*, *Othello*, *Pizarro*, and *William Tell*. Mrs. Greene made her first appearance at the St. Charles

as the Queen to his Hamlet and was Julia to his Spartacus in *The Gladiator*. John R. Scott played the second role in all of the tragedies.

The members of the company began their benefits immediately after Forrest concluded his engagement on the 15th. Scott, returning to his place as first tragedian, offered *Richard III* at the benefit given Lee, the principal artist of the theatre. He was Biron to the Isabella of Mrs. Duff when that actress made her last appearance on the 17th. On his night J. S. Browne presented *The Rivals* with Johnson, formerly of the Camp Street Theatre, as Mrs. Malaprop, and *The Old Clock, or Here She Goes, There She Goes*, a new piece written "by a gentleman of this city." The chief attraction at George Farren's benefit was the appearance of Love, the Polyphonist, who had been performing at Plough's Museum. This gentleman imitated the barking of a dog, the buzzing of a bee, and the conversation of stage coach passengers.

Celeste returned on April 22 and during a brief stay of four nights presented the last novelty of the season, Douglas Jerrold's new melodrama, *The Mother*. Mrs. Farren's farewell benefit was announced for the 26th, the night after Celeste's departure. Her name had not appeared in the daily notices since her performance in *Bertram* on February 11, nor was she listed in the cast for this night. According to the notice in the *Daily Picayune* Mrs. Harrison and Farren played the leads in *The Jewess*.

The season ended on April 28 with a benefit for stage manager Pearson. A stock company of unusual merit strengthened by engagements with popular stars and a varied repertoire mark this as one of the best seasons in the history of the St. Charles Theatre.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SEASON OF 1839-1840

#### AMERICAN THEATRE, 1839

The scarcity of money in the South may have determined Caldwell in his decision to open only one of his New Orleans theatres for the season 1839-1840. It was natural that he should inaugurate the fall season at the theatre on Camp Street, postponing the opening of the St. Charles until he was certain the larger establishment would be supported.

The company which assembled for the fall season included Messrs. Holland, DeBar, Sam Cowell, Archer, Keppell, Huntley, Schoolcraft, Boddy, Paret, Price, Naylor, and Mesdames DeBar Moore, Smith, Cioffi, Price, Jones, and Hinkie. Within a few weeks these were joined by Barrett, who acted as stage manager, Barton, J. Mills Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Williams (formerly Miss Verity), Radcliffe, Morton, and Mrs. Stuart (formerly Miss Vos).

The theatre opened on October 7 and for the first week featured musical pieces and farces, Mrs. DeBar and Sam Cowell generally taking the leads. The press reported that these were "creditably done," but as yet the theatre was not well attended. On the 15th Mrs. Stuart made her appearance in *Thérèse* and followed it the next night as Zephyrina in *The Lady and the Devil*. With the arrival of Morton to play opposite Mrs. Stuart the management turned to more serious fare, bringing out *The Hunchback* and *The Rent Day*.

Holland began an engagement on the 25th in his old favorite, *Paul Pry*. The newspapers now noted a "gradual and steady improvement in the audience" and the appearance of several ladies. On the 27th came the first novelty, Buckstone's farce, *The Irish Lion*.

When the company was further strengthened by the arrival of other members from New York, *The Lady of Lyons* was announced for November 2, Barton to appear as Claude Melnotte, Mrs. Stuart as Pauline, and Barrett in his old role as Colonel Damas. The performance elicited a comment from the *True American* of November 4. Barton and Mrs. Stuart were said to have been perceptibly nervous, but Barrett proved himself "the Colonel Damas." As usual DeBar came in for his share of unfavorable criticism. The writer regretted that he was so often compelled to speak disagreeably of this actor, but he found him "reckless to all advice or criticism." He was, "as is too often the case with him, imperfect in his part, and as is almost always the case with him very inappropriately and shabbily dressed." Just two weeks before this a critic in the *Daily Picayune* (October 23) had praised DeBar's lifelike impersonation of the drunkard in *The Rent Day*, adding, "There's a great deal in practice, that's a fact."

The management turned next to equestrian drama and with the assistance of the horse, Mazeppa, revived the play of that

name. After a run of five nights it made way for *El Hyder*. The success of the spectacular *Joan of Arc* which was given for the benefit of "little Franklin," Mazeppa's owner, led to an extension of this engagement. Meanwhile Pearson had made his appearance in *The Stranger*.

The season came to an end on November 30. Within a month the theatre had been let to James Foster who soon reopened it as a Ball Room, the first in this section of the city.<sup>1</sup>

ST. CHARLES THEATRE, 1839-1840

The St. Charles, newly painted and decorated, opened on Sunday, December 1. Recent recruits to the company which had played in the Camp Street Theatre were Mr. and Mrs. Joseph M. Field, engaged for the leads, and Misses Melton and Melville. George Barrett continued as stage manager. Communications in the *True American* and in the *Daily Picayune* referred to this company as being better than usual and hailed Caldwell's announcement that he would try to restore the old plan of a "regular stationary company" and few stars.

The opening bill consisted of *Englishmen in India*, featuring Miss Melton as Sally Scraggs and Miss Melville as Gulnare, and *Peter Wilkins* with Mrs. DeBar in the name part. Apparently Miss Melville slipped into minor roles after this performance or left the company. Her name is not found in any other announcement and in the notice of a repetition of *Peter Wilkins* Mrs. Stuart is listed as Gulnare. On the second night *The Hunchback* reintroduced Mr. and Mrs. Field as Sir Thomas Clifford and Julia. During the first week they played Claude Melnotte and Pauline, Alonzo and Cora (*Pizarro*), and Field appeared as de Mauprat in Bulwer's new play, *Richelieu*. The press spoke favorably of the "quiet natural style" of Mrs. Field (formerly Eliza Riddle) but as yet said nothing in praise of her husband.

James Balls, the light comedian, began an engagement on December 8. Two years before he had appeared here in many of the same parts which he now offered. The recent additions to his repertoire were *The Dancing Barber* by Charles Selby; *Rafael the Libertine*, *The Buckle of Brilliants*, and *State Secrets*, all by T. E. Wilks; and *The Lady of Lyons*. When *The School for Scandal* was presented with Balls as Charles Surface, Barrett

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, December 16, 1839.

impersonated Sir Peter Teazle, "his first appearance in that character." At Balls' benefit on December 24 Miss Melton essayed Mrs. Malaprop. Both she and Barrett undertook these roles because the company had no first old man and old woman, but only one fault could the enthusiastic critic of the *True American* (December 25) find with Miss Melton's impersonation. "Her face," commented he, "is too devilish pretty for an old woman."

Dan Marble came out before Balls concluded his engagement and on December 26 he was joined by Mrs. Lewis and La Petite Bertha. Henceforth, he offered his familiar Yankee characterizations between the plays or as afterpieces. On consecutive nights La Petite Bertha appeared as Young Norval (*Douglas*), Tom Thumb, Christine, the Youthful Queen, and Fortunato (*Matteo Falcone*) while her mother performed in *The French Spy* and *The Black Brig of Bermuda*. Marble appeared as Jerry Mayflower in the New Year's performance of *The Plains of Chippewa* and at his benefit on the 5th he took six parts, among them Long Tom Coffin and Carwin.

English opera was a popular feature of this season. With the arrival of the vocalist, John Sinclair, *Masaniello* and *Cinderella* were revived. Sinclair had lost but little of his power and sweetness reported the press, and it was still delightful to listen to him. Archer, Schoolcraft, Sam Cowell, Mrs. DeBar, and Mrs. Field furnished able assistance. The cast of *Cinderella* included Archer as Baron Pompolino, Barrett as Pedro, Field as Dandini, Mrs. DeBar as Cinderella, and Miss Melton as Clorinda. In the operatic *Spirit of Clyde*, introduced on Sinclair's last night, Miss Melton sang the feminine lead.

Mr. and Mrs. John Sloman made their first appearance in eleven years on January 23 when they opened in Sheridan Knowles' tragedy, *Love*, and F. F. Cooper's *Hercules, King of Clubs*. For five consecutive nights Mrs. Sloman appeared as the Countess of Eppenstein while Sloman enlivened the afterpieces and gave his comic songs. The couple played opposite one another in Buckstone's drama, *Henrietta the Forsaken*. During this engagement Mrs. Sloman donned trousers to play the title role in *Paul Jones*, a translation of Dumas' play made by W. Berger of this city. For her twelfth and last performance she essayed Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons* and Catharine in *Catharine and Petruccio*, Sloman appearing as Grumio in the latter piece.

Next came Mons. and Madame Lecomte and their *corps de ballet* made up of Martin, Kaiffer, Klisching, Madame Kaiffer, and Mademoiselle Desjardins. They offered the familiar *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*; a one act ballet entitled "The Masked Ball from Gustavus"; a new ballet pantomime, *Marco Bomba*; and a new extravaganza, *The Sorcerer*, in which Klisching took the part of a monkey. During a second engagement which began on February 15, the dancers appeared in the ballet pantomime, *La Somnambula*, and in the celebrated tomb scene from *Robert the Devil*.

The bills during February presented little of dramatic interest or worth. The resident company appeared only in farces and vaudevilles and, after Sinclair's return, as minor characters in operatic pieces. The new comic ballet of the dancers, Klisching's impersonation of a frog, and the farce, *Free and Easy*, by S. J. Arnold were the novelities of the month.

The management continued to feature opera and ballet in March. A trio composed of John Jones, tenor, W. F. Brough, "basso cantante," and Madame Otto, soprano, came for a series of opera. Of their nine offerings, *Amilie, or The Love Test*, with words by J. Haines and music by W. Rooke, had not previously been heard in New Orleans. *Fra Diavolo*, *Der Freischutz*, and *The Castle of Andalusia* had not been given before at this theatre. Madame Lecomte and her troupe returned on the 9th and for a while the vocalists and dancers alternated. Balls, who had commenced a re-engagement on February 24, remained through March.

Mr. and Mrs. Field went over to Mobile about the middle of March to shine as stars at George Chapman's theatre. When the vocalists prepared to leave, they returned and on April 5 acted in the première of Bulwer's new play, *The Sea Captain*. This, like the earlier play of W. Berger's, was an adaptation from Dumas. For a "farewell benefit" on the 9th Barton presented an evening of Shakespeare, the entertainment consisting of acts from *Lear*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and a "grand procession representing tableaux from fifteen of Shakespeare's most popular plays."

Caldwell's decision to abolish the starring system seems to have been forgotten as soon as it was announced. The visitors had followed one another in rapid succession and now as the season neared its close, the Barnes family arrived. Charlotte

Barnes came out as the Countess of Eppenstein (*Love*), and her father gave his famous characterization of Delph (*Family Jars*). Charles Mason joined them on the 14th and remained to assist Miss Barnes in oft repeated roles. Barnes with the assistance of Miss Melton introduced John Poole's *The Scape Goat* and John Morton's *Chaos is Come Again*. The engagement came to an end on April 24 with a performance of Arthur Murphy's tragedy, *The Grecian Daughter*.

Several of the season's most interesting plays were hastily brought forward during these last weeks. To exhibit the talents of his wife, Field translated and adapted Alexander Dumas' *Catharine Howard*, presenting it on her benefit night. For his own benefit he offered a translation of Dumas' *Mademoiselle de Belle Isle*, a play which later became known in the East as *Gabrielle, or a Night's Hazard*. Field was said to have expunged the objectionable part of the French plot and to have woven a new thread of interest into the play. The afterpiece on this evening was the beneficiary's new extravaganza entitled *Vot of It?* He had contributed humorous poems to the *Daily Picayune* this season under the name of "Straws" and in this "Straws" made his appearance "for the first time in dramatic shape." The third play on the bill was *The Lying Valet* with Sol Smith making his first appearance in nine years as Timothy Sharp. The actor-manager relates in his autobiography that he was passing through the city on his way back to St. Louis when Field asked him to appear.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Stuart's benefit introduced James Haynes' new tragedy, *Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots*. On his night Radcliffe gave *The Last Days of Pompeii* assisted by a stud of horses and two panthers; scenes from *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*; and Buckstone's new farce, *Our Mary Ann*. The last novelty of the season was N. P. Willis' *Tortosa the Usurer* presented by H. G. Pearson on the 7th.

The benefit for George Barrett brought the season to an end on May 10. Barrett had been an excellent manager and to him and his company the *Daily Picayune* of May 10 offered congratulations upon what it termed "a brilliant and profitable season."

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, 150.

## THE CHAPMANS, 1840

George Chapman brought a branch of his "Floating Company" to New Orleans in January of 1840. They made their first appearance at the German Theatre on Magazine Street on the 16th, offering *The Fall of the Alamo*, *The Bully and the Dandy*, and *The Actress of All Work*. It was announced that Chapman had taken the theatre for three nights a week; yet, according to the newspaper notices, he gave only two performances there.

He went next to the Arcade Theatre, an establishment which was a large room on the floor above the *Commercial Bulletin* office, formerly occupied by the *Commercial* library.<sup>3</sup> Here, on February 11, he initiated a series of light comedies with *The Comet*, *The Two Gregories*, and *The Actress of All Work*. In the company were the manager and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Bransom, McKibbin, Ward, Davis, Sutton, Lewis, and Harris. Burke, "recently of the St. Charles," joined them on the 19th, and two days later the *Commercial Bulletin* announced that Chapman, having made "considerable accession" to his company, could now bring out some of the sterling old plays in a suitable manner. On the same day the *Daily Picayune* carried the news that the "whole family of Chapmans with Mr. Hamilton" were about to open the Alhambra Theatre in Mobile. The last performance of which there is record took place on February 23. Apparently they left New Orleans immediately afterwards.

## AMERICAN THEATRE, SUMMER SEASON, 1840

The theatre on Camp Street opened a week after the closing of the St. Charles. Foster's ballroom had not been successful and since spring the theatre had been unused. Information concerning the management and the personnel of the company which now occupied it is limited. The few extant announcements mention only the names of Mr. and Mrs. Radcliffe, Mrs. Henry, Mrs. Cioffi, L. D. Foster, Willey, Boddy, and Miss Jones, a dancer.

Comedies, melodramas, and farces generally comprised the bills offered by the little company. On the 19th, "for the benefit of an indigent family" there was a performance of *Richard III* in French. On the 22nd at the benefit for the "Natchez sufferers in the late fire", Messrs. Barton, Pearson, A. J. Roley Marks,

<sup>3</sup> *Commercial Bulletin*, Feb. 11, 1840.

Mrs. Stewart, and Miss Verity volunteered their aid. The next night a gentleman from the German theatre sang English and German songs.

Later entertainment included Negro extravaganzas by Mick Saunders of the Orleans Amphitheatre, magic and juggling by Ali Abdul Maza, and a dance recital by a horse that shuffled and cut pigeon wings. On June 10 the management featured the songs of "Old Corn Meal," the Negro who had appeared in Banister's farce, *Life in New Orleans*. Several times during the last week of the season "Messrs. Carroll and Company" came over from the circus to entertain with still vaulting and tumbling.

The performance of June 14 was the last to be given in the "little Camp." Almost immediately carpenters began cutting away the lobbies and boxes and when next the doors opened, it was to admit merchants and customers to the Camp Street Exchange.<sup>4</sup>

NEW AMERICAN THEATRE, MAGAZINE STREET, 1840

Few and scattered are the records that pertain to summer theatricals in New Orleans and for 1840 there is mention of only one performance. On July 4 the *Daily Picayune* carried the announcement of an American performance at the German Theatre on Magazine Street. The bill consisted of a German farce presented by the German Company; songs by Madame Thielman, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Schoolcraft; a recital of "The Declaration of Independence"; and the afterpiece, *Who's the Dupe?*, featuring Madame Thielman and Radcliffe.

That there may have been further activity in the German Theatre this summer is suggested by the wording of an advertisement in the *Daily Picayune* of September 18. This stated that the New American Theatre (late the German Theatre) on Magazine Street would reopen the following evening. The entertainment was to consist of *The Irish Tutor* and *The Rival Suitors*; named in the casts were Mr. and Mrs. Radcliffe, Mr. and Mrs. Henry, Schoolcraft, and Lloyd. This one reference to a fall season at the new American Theatre is all that has been found.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Picayune*, June 7, 1840.

## CHAPTER XI

## THE SEASON OF 1840-1841

## ST. CHARLES THEATRE, 1840-1841

The theatrical monopoly which Caldwell had enjoyed for the past two years came to an end in the fall of 1840. As the St. Charles opened for its sixth season, a rival theatre erected by Messrs. Ludlow and Smith was nearing completion.

The company at the St. Charles differed little from that of the previous season. Sam Cowell, Archer, Mrs. Stuart, James M. Brown, and Miss Melton were the only serious losses. New members included Mr. and Mrs. Sloman, A. L. Pickering, a favorite of a past season, Nelson, Mr. and Mrs. Reeder, Mrs. Ennissol, and Misses Morgan and Mowbray. George Barrett continued to act as stage manager.

The theatre opened on October 9 with *Speed the Plough* and *The Loan of a Lover*. In the comedy Barrett played Bob Handy and Mrs. DeBar, Susan Ashfield; in the farce Radcliffe was Peter Spyk to Mrs. DeBar's Gertrude. Miss Mowbray was introduced in *Mischief Making*, the afterpiece on the second night, and on the 15th Miss Morgan made her debut as Eudiga in *Charles XII*, following it the next night with Margareta in *No Song, No Supper*. Until all of the dramatic corps arrived the management continued to feature light farce such as this.

William Chapman, the first of the visiting performers, opened an engagement on the 19th. Though he was an excellent comedian, his performance in such favorites as *The Young Widow*, *The Heir at Law*, *The Turnpike Gate*, *Sweethearts and Wives*, *The Dead Shot*, and *The Hundred Pound Note* attracted few people. Commented the *Daily Picayune* on the day after his benefit (October 28): "It is not yet fashionable to attend the theatre."

With the return of Mr. and Mrs. Field the manager turned to domestic drama bringing out *The Lady of Lyons* on November 1. The curtain raiser was Buckstone's new farce, *Shocking Events*, and the afterpiece was *His Last Legs*, a comedy by W. B. Bernard which had been introduced earlier in the week. On the 6th Barton made one of his rare appearances as Lear, Mrs. Field playing Cordelia and Pickering, Edmund. The 8th brought a novelty, Edward Stirling's dramatization of *Nicholas Nickleby*. The next night Moses S. Phillips, from the New York Theatres, made his first and only appearance in the city as Billy Lackaday in *Sweethearts and Wives*.

Ludlow and Smith opened their new theatre on November 10, and as a counterattraction the St. Charles presented Lewellen and his horse Timour in Andrew Ducrow's equestrian drama, *St. George and the Dragon*, in preparation since the commencement of the season. This ran every night during Timour's engagement and at Lewellen's benefit on November 15 was preceded by *Conanachestat, or The Indian's War Horse*, another novelty written especially for Timour.

The next visitor was the tragedian Fitzgerald Tasistro. He came out on the 19th as Othello, followed it with Beverly (*The Gamester*), and was then forced to postpone his next performance "in consequence of a recent accident." Mr. and Mrs. Sloman had now arrived and on the 22nd Sloman impersonated Jim Bags in *The Wandering Minstrel*. Tasistro reappeared on the 23rd in Sheridan Knowles' *John of Procida*, a play which had been introduced to New Orleans at the rival theatre six days before. Other roles for the tragedian were Shylock, Macbeth, Rolla, Hamlet, and Belmour (*Is He Jealous?*). The plays during Tasistro's engagement were well cast. Mr. and Mrs. Field and Mrs. Sloman gave the star excellent support; yet he played to small houses, and less than a hundred were said to have witnessed the *Merchant of Venice* in which Mrs. Sloman made her first appearance of the season. The *Bee* of November 26 said this lack of patronage was due to the inefficiency of the theatrical corps; the *Daily Picayune* of the 29th reported that the company was as good as any in the Union.

Dan Marble began an engagement on November 25 and for a while his Yankee plays and Tasistro's tragedies alternated. He appeared in two novelties during this visit, *The Gamecock of the Wilderness*, and J. H. Conway's *The Times That Tried Us*, but neither proved so successful as the familiar *Sam Patch in France*, *The Vermonter*, and *The Forest Rose*.

Several novelties of early December deserve mention. At the benefit for Lewellen on the conclusion of Timour's re-engagement, some of the artists from the French theatre on Orleans Street came over to present a new vaudeville entitled *Paule et Pauline, or Napoleon dans les Cent Jours*. On the 6th came a new play *Richard Savage*, translated and adapted to the English stage by Dr. M. Morton Dowler of Lafayette, Louisiana. The *Daily Picayune* of the 8th stated that the play was highly successful and so great was the interest of the audience that no one left the theatre from the rising of the curtain to the conclusion.

The middle of December brought Tyrone Power and better days for the St. Charles. The popular comedian repeated many of the roles which he had introduced in his last visit six years ago, and now for the first time in New Orleans he appeared in *The Irish Lion*, *His Last Legs*, and *Rory O'More*. During a second engagement which began on the 28th, he introduced W. B. Bernard's farce, *The Irish Attorney*, and Mrs. Gore's *King O'Neil*. He bade farewell on January 9 but when his steamer for Havana was detained, he returned on the 20th for another performance.

The management now brought forward Master Diamond, an Ethiopian imitator whose antics on a stage dedicated to drama were frowned upon by public and press alike. Nevertheless, his hornpipes, pigeon wings, double shuffle, and "Black Bayadère dance à la Fanny Elssler" proved the chief drawing card during the week of January 10. When both of the American theatres staged the première of Bulwer's new comedy, *Money*, on the same night, the St. Charles offered Master Diamond as an additional attraction. A match dance with someone announced as Mercer of Louisville, Kentucky, brought Diamond back on the 19th. The public, who were said to have poured \$1,500 into the coffers that night, were indignant when they learned that Mercer was a supernumerary at the theatre.<sup>1</sup> Sol Smith says that the instigator of this "humbug match" was none other than P. T. Barnum then at the beginning of his career.<sup>2</sup>

This was a season of varying fortune for the St. Charles. William Ranger, the next star, played a profitless engagement "to empty boxes" though his offerings were new and his delineations of French characters were described as excellent. His repertoire consisted of *The Romantic Widow*, *The Artist's Wife*, *The Lover Husband*, *The Gentleman and the Upstart*, and *Le Preux Chevalier*. "Here is legitimate acting," commented the *Daily Picayune* on January 26, "pure, polished, high toned, and beautifully refined acting . . . and the St. Charles is empty."

A galaxy of stars descended on the theatre in February. John Baldwin Buckstone, the English playwright and actor, came out on the 1st. Marble returned for a short engagement, and Caldwell himself appeared on several of the "off nights." Buckstone acted in his own *Rural Felicity*, *A Kiss in the Dark*, *Single Life*, and *Weak Points*. They were all new to this city, but the actor was said to have fared no better than Ranger.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, January 26, 1841.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, 155.

The first of the company benefits was that of Barrett's on February 17. The chief attraction on this occasion seems to have been the theatrical début of Miss Mason. This young lady made "her first appearance on any stage" as Editha in Fitzball's melodrama, *Walter Tyrrell*, and in *Is He Jealous?* For Mrs. Field's night were announced the popular *Mademoiselle de Belle Isle* and the latest piece from the pen of her husband, "an entire new romantic antic, vocal, local sketch in verse called *G-A-G, or The Starring System*."

The last weeks of this season belong to Fanny Elssler, the celebrated *danseuse* who had made her American début the previous May. The resident company offered little of consequence during her visit and on several nights when she did not appear, the theatre remained dark. The star made her bow on March 5 in the ballet pantomime, *La Sylphide*, assisted by the members of her troupe, Monsieur Sylvain, C. T. Parsloe, and Madame Arraline. The other ballets in which she appeared were *Nathalie*, *The Tarentule*, and *Le Dieu et La Bayadère*. In the latter, Riese, formerly manager of the German theatre in Philadelphia, played the Unknown. With Elssler's benefit on April 2 Barrett brought the season to a close. The press reported receipts of \$3,760 on this night, all of which, except \$500 for expenses of the house, went to the dancer.

Caldwell paid Elssler \$1,000 for each performance; yet according to the record kept by George Holland, the engagement was a profitable one for the theatre, the receipts for the ten nights averaging \$2,597.35 a night.<sup>3</sup> The answer as to how Caldwell succeeded where other managers had failed can be found in the admission which he charged during the engagement. Not only were the prices doubled, but on the opening night the boxes and parquet seats were sold at auction to the highest bidders.

The theatre reopened on April 7 for a complimentary benefit tendered Joseph M. Field. Though Fanny Elssler was to appear, there was no increase in price of admission. The committee had asked the dancer to name her own terms for this performance, and she, with a generosity hitherto unnoted, had declined any remuneration.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Holland Memorial, *Sketch of the Life of George Holland*, 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Picayune*, April 7, 1841.

This season had been a disastrous one for the St. Charles. Contemporary press notices as well as the memoirs of Noah Ludlow and Sol Smith assert that only the engagements with Tyrone Power and Fanny Elssler had been profitable. A communication in the *Bee* of March 16 attributed the failure to Caldwell's reliance on others in the management of his theatre. The mediocrity of the company may be cited as another cause of failure. Caldwell had weakened his troupe at the St. Charles by sending over members as support for the stars who played in the theatre he had built in Mobile. Had Mr. and Mrs. Sloman, Mr. and Mrs. Field, Miss Morgan, and others remained in New Orleans for the entire season the St. Charles could have furnished formidable opposition to the newly erected American Theatre of Ludlow and Smith.

AMERICAN THEATRE, POYDRAS STREET, 1840-1841

Noah Ludlow and Sol Smith, the lessees of the new American Theatre, had formed a partnership in 1835 for the management of the theatres in Mobile and St. Louis. The decision to leave Mobile for New Orleans had been made suddenly when they learned that James Caldwell planned to extend his interests to the Alabama city. The town was not large enough to support two theatres and as New Orleans now had only one, they felt it wiser to compete with Caldwell in the larger and more theatrically minded city.

The site selected for the theatre was on Poydras Street, between St. Francis and Camp Street, and had originally been leased by Messrs. Dubois and Kendig who intended to erect a livery stable and circus. Smith arranged with Dubois and Kendig to build according to his specifications and to lease the establishment to him for five years at \$10,000 a year.<sup>5</sup>

The chief feature of the new theatre was the "grand equestrian circle", forty-two feet in diameter, surrounded on three sides by a spacious pit. This was provided with a removable floor and seats which could be taken up or replaced in several hours, thus converting the circle into a parquet or the parquet into a circle as the occasion required. Two entrances led from the stables of the establishment to the circle.

The building had three tiers, each containing seventeen boxes. The interior was ornamented in a "free modern style."

<sup>5</sup> Smith *op. cit.*, 154.

The fluted columns supporting the boxes were purely American in style, and the four antes supporting the proscenium were modeled after "none of the ancient orders" but were of a style first used in New York. They were crowned by an elliptic arch in the center of which was an American eagle surrounded by the flags of the Union. The drop scene represented the landing of Columbus in the New World.

The stage was fifty-four feet deep and forty-four feet wide and, counting the space occupied by the scenery, the breadth was seventy feet. In addition to the usual apartments connected with the stage, dressing rooms, green room, music room, etc., there were dressing rooms for the equestrians and stabling arrangements for eighteen horses.

The architect of the theatre estimated that it could accommodate nineteen hundred persons, "allowing eighteen inches to each individual." Ludlow gives the capacity as about twelve hundred.

The company as listed in the first announcement of the season included Messrs. Ludlow, Smith, Farren, John Greene, Sankey, Baily, Johnson, Sutherland, R. Russell, Jr., F. Johnson, Maynard, C. H. Saunders, James Wright, Rose, Ross, and Lavette, Mesdames Farren, Maynard, Greene, Baily, Warren, Carroll, Wright, and Miss Crane. To these should be added the names of E. S. Conner, Beecum, Mesdames Durie and Mueller, and Miss Johnson. C. H. Mueller was leader of the orchestra, and C. L. Smith was scenic artist. The equestrian company under the direction of John Robinson numbered among its members B. W. Carroll, Foster, Harrington, Woods, W. Lake, Rogers, Jackson, Masters Hernandez and Pelby, and the clowns, George Stone and Eldred.

The theatre opened November 10, 1840 with a new national overture composed by Mueller, an address by Mrs. Farren, and *The Honey Moon*. The papers of the following day described the house as being "thronged from pit to dome." Smith recalls that the receipts for the opening were \$981.25.<sup>6</sup> E. S. Conner came out on the second night as Cardinal Richelieu in Bulwer's play of that name and on his next appearance impersonated Angelo in *Tortosa the Usurer* and Tristram Fickle in *The Weathercock*. Jack Greene made his bow on the 14th as Murtock Delany in *Irishman in London* and on the 16th Mrs. Greene appeared

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

in her favorite role of Widow Melnotte. Meanwhile *Paul Jones* was revived with Conner as Long Tom Coffin, Ludlow as Captain Broughcliffe, and Mrs. Maynard as Kate Plowden. The first of many revivals at the American this season, the play was often repeated.

An interesting novelty was Sheridan Knowles' *John of Procida* given on the 17th, "for the first time in America". The next night Conner took a benefit appearing as Huon in Knowles' earlier play, *Love*, and the American sailor in *The Star Spangled Banner*, a farce new to the city.

The equestrian troupe gave its first performance on the 19th. After the grand entrée, announced in the newspaper notices as "Greeks Preparing for Battle," Messrs. Carroll and Whitlock and Master Hernandez performed feats of horsemanship, and Foster and Luke sang comic songs. The combination of equestrian performances and dramatic entertainment on the same evening won immediate favor and though they did not appear every night, the equestrians contributed in a large measure to the success of the new theatre. On the evenings when the management featured equestrian dramas, the troupe did not perform in the circle but assisted the company. The first revival of this type was *Mazeppa* cast with Lewellen and his horse, Timour, Conner, Mrs. Farren, and Mrs. Maynard in the principal roles. It ran three nights before making way for *The Youthful Days of Harrison*, a new play founded on events in the early history of the West. On this evening the equestrians returned to the circle, offering among other entertainment, a new Chinese entrée.

Charles Eaton came out on December 1 as Richard III. Conner, now a regular member of the company, assisted as Richmond, Mrs. Farren as the Queen, and Mrs. Maynard as the Duchess of York. The visitor went through a familiar round, terminating his engagement on the 11th in *Hamlet*. His tragic characterizations had been ably supported by Mrs. Farren, Conner, Maynard, Beecom, Mrs. Maynard, Mrs. Greene, and the lesser members of the company.

The manager turned again to equestrian drama after Eaton's departure reviving *Timour the Tartar* on the 14th. The spectacle was excellently cast with Conner in the name part, Mrs. Greene as Zorilda, Mrs. Farren as Selima, and Master Hernandez as Prince Agib. Had not Charles Webb arrived at this time its run would doubtless have been longer.

On Christmas there were both day and night performances. Though the afternoon performance consisted only of equestrian exhibitions and tightrope dances by the visiting Sciarra family, it attracted a good house. Henceforth the matinée became a regular feature on holidays and often on Saturdays. The entertainment in the evening featured *George Barnwell* and the spectacular *Cherry and Fair Star* with Mrs. Greene and Mrs. Farren in the name parts. This, like the other revivals of the season, had many repetitions and several times served as an afterpiece to the performances in the circle. When it was given for the sixth time on December 30, it was coupled with Sergeant Talfourd's new tragedy, *Glencoe*.

January, like the preceding month, was devoted largely to revivals, *Tekeli* and *El Hyder* joining *Cherry and Fair Star* in the bills. The equestrian company was now augmented by that of Messrs. Fogg and Stickney. Sol Smith explains that he made the arrangement to prevent the Fogg and Stickney troupe from being engaged by the St. Charles Theatre. He confesses that it was an error in management which cost the firm \$9,300 and the expense of keeping an extra stud of horses.<sup>7</sup> The companies made their first joint appearance on January 10 and their last on March 2.

One of the few novelties of this month was *Money* by Bulwer, a comedy which was introduced at the St. Charles on the same night. C. H. Saunders' benefit brought Master Diamond to the theatre in a new sketch of Negro character entitled *Dark Doings*. With Eaton's return on the 29th legitimate fare such as *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* and *The Iron Chest* made its appearance.

Fanny Fitzwilliam, the "bright particular star of the season," arrived in February. The equestrian companies were sent off to another section of the city; the parquet seats were replaced, and the theatre turned over to the English comédienne. She made her début in *The Irish Widow* and Buckstone's *Widow Wiggins*, following it with *The Country Girl*; *The Soldier's Daughter*, an alteration of Cherry's play; and *Mischief Making*. At her benefit on the 8th she offered Moncrieff's new burletta, *The Ladies Club*. The gentlemen of the press described the star as the "most dashing, sparkling, captivating little actress that ever visited this

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

section." Sol Smith estimated that from nine hundred to a thousand people crowded the theatre each night during the engagement.<sup>8</sup>

Mrs. Fitzwilliam opened a second engagement on the 10th with *Foreign Airs and Native Graces*, another of Moncrieff's new burlettas. Buckstone, fresh from his engagement at the St. Charles, appeared with her in *Married Life*; his new drama, *The Banished Star*; and *Foreign Airs and Native Graces*. His benefit on the 18th presented them as Rosalind and Touchstone (*As You Like It*) and as Louisa and Timid (*The Dead Shot*).

Within the next few days Sol Smith, Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Mrs. Greene, Conner, and others of the company left for Mobile where Mrs. Fitzwilliam was to appear in Ludlow and Smith's old theatre. During their absence Signor Hervio Nano, the bat man, made an appearance in the pantomime, *Bippoo the Island Ape*. Charles Eaton reappeared on the 23rd as Carwin and Sylvester Daggerwood, and the next night brought Charles Webb as Rolla to Eaton's Pizarro. *Othello*, *Damon and Pythias*, and *Romeo and Juliet* now figured in the bills. Eaton left after his benefit on March 1, but Webb remained a few nights longer to play the lead in *The Forty Thieves* and *The Cataract of The Ganges*. Sol Smith may have been thinking of these performances when he recorded that Webb was the "heavy man" this season.<sup>9</sup>

Mrs. Fitzwilliam commenced a third engagement on March 8. While Fanny Elssler danced at the St. Charles, the star at the American caricatured her. The dancer in *Foreign Airs and Native Graces* was unmistakably patterned on Elssler and in Mark Lemon's satirical *Out of Place*, Mrs. Fitzwilliam was billed as Sophy Sollikins with songs and "La Cracovienne à la Elssler." The little comédienne was as popular as ever. Reported the *Daily Picayune* of March 14 after her benefit: "Some 300 or 400 were compelled to stand in the box lobbies . . . and what is more, the house was extremely fashionable."

Mrs. Fitzwilliam and Buckstone began another joint engagement on the 14th in *Englishmen in India* and in *Our Mary Ann*. To the roles of his previous engagement Buckstone now added those of Nicolas Dovetail in *Mischief Making*, Wormwood in *The Lottery Ticket*, Mr. Twiddy in the local première of his own drama,

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

*The Christening*, and Inkpen in *Tom Noddy's Secret*. Mrs. Fitzwilliam appeared for the first time in *The Barrack Room* and in *Tom Noddy's Secret*.

Signor Hervio Nano, having recovered from his indisposition, returned on the 19th, appearing now in *The Gnome Fly* and in *The Demon Dwarf*. Less spectacular were the characterizations of the next visitor, James S. Browne. He made his bow on the 26th in three of the most popular roles of his last visit and continued in familiar parts. Fanny Elssler visited the theatre on the 28th when she played Sergeant Austerlitz in the *Maid of Croissy* and Conner made his last appearance of the season in *Paul Jones*.

The equestrian corps returned the last of March after several weeks in Mobile. Commented the *Daily Picayune* on the 30th: "The taste for this amendment is by no means weary, and the skilful success of change kept up by the management is admirably in union with public feeling. Let the horses run as long as the people want them, and when business grows slack, slack the reins and trot out the drama again."

The middle of April Ludlow took some of the company to St. Louis to open the theatre there.<sup>10</sup> To strengthen the group that remained with Smith the manager engaged Mr. and Mrs. DeBar, formerly of the St. Charles. Mrs. Fitzwilliam and Buckstone returned on the 17th. They repeated popular roles and brought out several novelties: Edward Mayhew's *Make Your Wills*, and Buckstone's *The Snapping Turtles* and *The Dream at Sea*. The latter was introduced at the benefit given John Povey, a former actor at the Park Theatre in New York who had become the agent for Mrs. Fitzwilliam.

The season was now drawing to a close. In the ten-day interval before Mrs. Fitzwilliam and Buckstone began their final engagement, Smith featured equestrian exhibitions in the circle and spectacles with DeBar in the male lead. Two performances of this period are of more than usual interest, for they enlisted the services of the great tragic actress, Mrs. Duff. She returned to the stage on the 26th enacting Mrs. Haller to the Stranger of Beecum and the Countess of Mrs. Greene, the beneficiary. At a benefit for the Firemen's Charitable Fund the following night she appeared as Thérèse, the orphan of Geneva.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

Mrs. Fitzwilliam and Buckstone made their re-entry on May 5 when, in addition to several familiar pieces, they presented *Fashionable Friends*. The other novelty of the engagement was Bayly's farce, *My Little Adopted*, introduced on May 8 and repeated at Mrs. Fitzwilliam's farewell benefit on the 10th.

The season ended on May 11 with a benefit for Sol Smith. Two nights later the theatre was reopened for a complimentary benefit given H. G. Pearson of the St. Charles. Mrs. Fitzwilliam and Buckstone and members of Smith's company volunteered their services.

The first season of the American Theatre proved a profitable one for its managers. Said the *Daily Picayune* on the 11th: "We question whether any theatre in the Union has, during the last season, brought in such rich returns both to managers and stars." Ludlow recalls that the proceeds were \$20,000.<sup>11</sup> Smith mentions that \$12,000 of their Mobile debts were paid out of the season's profits, notwithstanding the enormous expenses involved in carrying it through.<sup>12</sup> Its success must be attributed not to the novelty of the equestrian performances but to the intrinsic merit of the stock company and the excellent casting of the plays.

CARROLLTON, 1841

The Carrollton House was a popular summer resort within a fifteen minute train ride of New Orleans. Since the opening of the hotel in 1837 the management had featured fireworks and concerts in the gardens. Now, the saloon of the house was "neatly and elegantly fitted up" for dramatic entertainment, and on May 30 William Chapman and Signor Cioffi began a season of vaudeville and concert. In the theatrical company were Chapman and his wife, Morton, Schoolcraft, Reeder, Mrs. Cioffi, and Miss Morgan.

The night's entertainment began with a concert "immediately after the arrival of the seven o'clock cars." Before the vaudeville there was a short intermission "for promenading and refreshment," and the performance ended in time for the spectators to catch the ten o'clock train to the city.

The season opened with the farce, *Gretna Green*, but the second performance took place at the American Exchange on Camp Street as a misunderstanding had arisen between the pro-

<sup>11</sup> Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 543.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, 156.

prietor of the hotel and Chapman and Cioffi.<sup>13</sup> They were back at Carrollton by June 13, however, and continued to give performances each Sunday throughout July. Scattered notices appear in the *Daily Picayune* as late as the 25th but those of the last two weeks do not name the vaudevilles which were offered.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SEASON OF 1841-1842

#### ST. CHARLES THEATRE, 1841-1842

The St. Charles opened for the seventh season on October 25, 1841. Caldwell had erected an "arena" on the stage, and the first two weeks were devoted to equestrian performances and pantomimes. There were "grand entrées," feats of mounting and dismounting, vaulting, ropewalking, and tumbling. The equestrian company included S. P. Stickney, Miss Rosaline Stickney, G. W. Sergeant and his two children, H. Long, Lipman, Levi, Lake, and Smith, a clown. On several evenings Monsieur Paul, the French Hercules from the Tacon Theatre, Havana, appeared with the troupe in a number of astonishing Roman and Grecian feats of strength.

The first dramatic performance was *The Secret* given on November 7 with Mrs. Sergeant, "her first appearance," and Holland as the principals. As was customary during the first six weeks of this season, the bill also included an equestrian display. Sloman and Mrs. George Rowe, a newcomer, came out the next evening in the familiar farce, *My Neighbor's Wife*, and on the 9th "Old Joe" Cowell made his first appearance in several years as Dandelion in the farce, *Hunting a Turtle*.

Chief among the recruits this season were Mr. and Mrs. Brunton who made their début on the 12th as Dermot and Sarah in *The Poor Soldier*. Besides those already mentioned the company included Mr. and Mrs. John Greene, Mr. and Mrs. Hill, Barrett, Archer, Alexander Pickering, Jewell, Pacaud, Sloman, Reeder, H. G. Pearson, William Anderson, Naylor, Mrs. Page, Mrs. Durie, and Madame de Manville. Barton was acting manager and Pearson stage manager.

Several of the lesser stars began engagements on November 14. Joe Blackburn, the famous English clown, performed in the arena. Master Wood did a Cocoa-Nut Dance, "in character," and

<sup>13</sup> *Daily Picayune*, June 6, 1841.

T. S. Cline and Wood appeared in a new drama, *The Dumb Man of Manchester*. Two nights later Cline and Wood, assisted by the wonderful dog, Bruin, introduced the nautical drama, *The Murdered Boatman and His Dog*. During this engagement Master Wood appeared with Cline in *Timour the Tartar* and with his father in the pantomime, *Philip Quarl and His Monkey*, and in E. A. Somerset's *Jack the Giant Killer*. For his benefit on December 2 Wood offered the grand oriental spectacle, *The Grateful Lion*.

Miss Blanche Kemble, a grandniece of John Kemble, starred on November 18 as Alice in *The Wreck Ashore*. On the 20th Mr. and Mrs. John Greene made their first appearance as Teague and Arabella in *The Honest Thieves*. George Barrett joined the company on the 27th, performing as O'Callaghan in the popular comedy, *His Last Legs*. The next evening brought the Swiss Family, La Petite Carline, and the dancers, Monsieur Frederic and Madame Arraline. The dancers assisted the Swiss Family in their comic ballets and pantomimes and stayed on as members of the company.

The first of the major stars was James Hackett who opened his engagement on December 6 in *Henry IV*. Assisting him were Barrett as Prince Hal and T. S. Cline as Hotspur. Hackett went through the usual round of plays offering *The Kentuckian*, *Mons. Mallet*, *Rip Van Winkle*, and *Jonathan in England*. Sol Smith says that the star drew a \$600 house at his opening, played to \$200 audiences for a week, and had \$700 at his benefit.<sup>1</sup>

The "arena sports" had been discontinued during Hackett's visit but after his departure on December 13, Levi North, "the greatest equestrian rider in the world," began an engagement of six nights. When the Swiss Family took a benefit on the 18th, S. Johnson, a delineator of Negro character from New York, appeared, and J. Sandford sang some of his Negro songs accompanied by the "Virginia Paginini," Winn.

The first important dramatic presentation was Boucicault's hit of the current English season, *London Assurance*, presented on December 20 with an excellent cast led by Mr. and Mrs. Greene, Barrett, Pearson, and Mrs. Sergeant. In view of the emphasis

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, 162.

this season on equestrian performances and arena sports, it is interesting to read the announcement in the *Bee* of the 20th.

It is at all times pleasurable to the proprietor to offer the legitimate drama in the St. Charles Theatre—it was for that purpose he expended on its erection a fortune. . . . But alas! at this day he considers that he built the magnificent temple too soon, or too late, for nothing but a series of losses has followed his struggle to maintain the proudest monument to the dramatic art in this country. Should the success of this comedy be commensurate with its high merit, it being decidedly the best that has been written in a quarter of a century, and the great pains and expenses which have been devoted to it, the manager will be satisfied that his effort to restore a legitimate taste has not been unavailing.

The comedy proved highly successful and was repeated some eighteen times during the next two and a half months.

James Hackett returned on December 27 as Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and the next night appeared as Lear, his first representation of the role in New Orleans. Mrs. Richardson, a recent addition to the company, assisted him as Cordelia.

Those who attended the theatre on January 1, 1842, saw three new pieces: George Pitt's *Eddystone Elf*, advertised as "first time in this country," Edward Stirling's *Blue Jackets*, and *The Red Indian and His Dog*. Also featured was a "great contention" between J. Sandford and Master Diamond.

The most popular engagement of the season was that of the operatic trio, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Seguin and Manvers, who came on January 5. They opened in Bellini's *Norma* assisted by Brunton, Mrs. Richardson, and Madame Thielman. Apparently the German actress appeared only in *Norma*; her name is not included in the casts of the other operas presented by the visitors. Their seventeen performances included repetitions of *Norma*, *Cinderella*, *La Sonnambula* and *Fra Diavolo*. They also presented two operas not previously heard in New Orleans: *Zampa* by Herold, and *La Gazza Ladra* by Rossini. Commented the *Bee* of January 8 after the second presentation of *Norma*: "Our citizens have now an opportunity of exhibiting their boasted passion for fine music. We have at length at the St. Charles, the opera, the genuine opera, sung and played in a style not unworthy of the great writers of music."

Dan Marble joined the ranks of the visiting performers on January 9 and remained for two weeks, offering his Yankee characterizations on nights when the opera singers did not appear. With the exception of his opening plays, *The American Farmer* and *Ebenezer Venture*, his repertoire contained nothing new.

The arrival of J. S. Brown and Mrs. Stuart early in February strengthened the resident company. They made their first appearance in *London Assurance*, Brown taking the part of Dazzle, as he had in the American première of the comedy, and Mrs. Stuart playing Grace Harkaway. The revival was even more successful than the earlier production. Stated the announcement on the third night of its run: "The unexampled success of *London Assurance* as now cast is the only apology for the manager's continuance of this play." To this an enthusiastic critic in the *Daily Picayune* replied, "For our part we should be glad to see it run through the whole season." The popularity of the play inspired the rhymed parody, *New Orleans Assurance*, which was introduced on the 13th. The notice states that it was "written expressly by \_\_\_\_\_ for the St. Charles."

The comédienne, Miss Rock, opened an engagement on February 11 with *The Belle's Stratagem* and *Sevén's the Main*. She played opposite Barrett in the still popular *Perfection*, and in *The School for Scandal* she was supported by Barrett as Sir Peter and J. S. Browne as Joseph Surface. T. D. Rice, recently returned from Europe, came on the 16th and for six consecutive evenings he entertained with impersonations of Jim Crow, Ginger Blue, Jumbo Jim, and Zip Larkin (*Such a Gitting Up Stairs*). Of his repertoire Leman Rede's *Foreign Prince* and the farce, *Such a Gitting Up Stairs*, had been written for him since his last visit to the city.

The Italian Opera Company from Havana arrived for a series of opera near the end of February. The troupe was said to have over fifty-seven members and to exceed in number and talent all those that had preceded it. The principal singers were Albertazzi, Baliali, Ober, Perozzi, Ceconi, Rossi, and Salvatori; Signoras Marozzi, Rossi, and Albertazzi. Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays were designated as opera nights. They opened with Donizetti's *Marino Faliero* on February 22. The *Daily Picayune* reported on the following day that people had rushed

to the theatre "with perfect ferocity" and before seven o'clock the pit and upper tiers were "choked up." Their ten performances included two operas which had not previously been heard in New Orleans: Bellini's *Beatrice di Tendi* and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Miss Rock continued her engagement, appearing at Madame Arraline's benefit (February 23) in the farce, *The Barrack Room*, and at Pearson's in *Seven's the Main*. On the latter occasion *The Lady of Lyons* was revived for the first time this season, the beneficiary playing Claude Melnotte to the Pauline of Mrs. Stuart. Samuel Butler, "late from Drury Lane," came on the 28th and for the next few nights appeared in Shakespearian roles. He played opposite Mrs. Stuart in *Macbeth* when she took a benefit on March 2 and assisted Miss Rock in her benefit performance of *Hamlet*.

The eleventh presentation of the Italian Opera Company was advertised for Sunday, March 13, but the performance did not take place. That evening, about half-past six, a coffin factory behind the theatre caught fire. The flames spread to the windows of the St. Charles and soon the entire building was burning. The editor of the *Bee*, who had been present at the fire, wrote feelingly of the event the following day:

. . . We gazed in mute amazement of the terrific sight until the colossal statue of Tragedy, which adorned the front of the building caught on fire, and the mask of her dramatic sister, Comedy, was likewise in flames. . . . From the extended arms of Tragedy the fire glowed with surprising effect. When the blaze died away, after having consumed the outer painting, her hands were a coal of fire, red as Lady Macbeth's after dipping hers in the blood of Duncan; whilst the face of Comedy was as Lady Teazle when discovered in the apartments of Joseph Surface. They were the last mementos of the exquisite and sublime representations we had witnessed in the Temple, and when they fell from their pedestals, we turned with a moist eye and heaving bosom; we had witnessed the last scene of the St. Charles. The curtain had fallen to rise no more, and the glory of the drama has vanished forever.

## AMERICAN THEATRE, POYDRAS STREET, 1841-1842

The American Theatre on Poydras Street opened for its second season on November 20, 1841. The dress circle had been improved and the managers now stated that "ALL who purchase tickets for that part of the house will be certain of being accommodated with good seats."

The dramatic company included Managers Ludlow and Smith, Farren, Sankey, Bailey, Johnson, Sutherland, Maynard, Saunders, James Wright, Rose, Ross, De Gentzen, Cook, Reid, DeBar, Thorne, Leicester, Germon, Lavette, a dancer, Mesdames Farren, Johnson, Wright, Mueller, Foster, Germon, Warren, Russell, and Misses Eliza Petrie and Louisa Johnson, the dancer. Joseph Foster came in February to direct and act in melodramatic spectacles, and later in the season Morris, Samuel Jones, and A. J. Marks joined the company. C. H. Mueller was leader of the seventeen-piece orchestra, C. L. Smith, scenic artist, and Cranmer, machinist. In the equestrian troupe again headed by J. Robinson were Whitlock, Clarke, D. Stone, E. Stone, Master Hernandez, and the clowns, G. Stone and G. Eldred.

The comedy of the opening night was *The Heir at Law* featuring Jemmy Thorne and Mrs. Richard Russell, favorite performers who had been absent from the city for several years. This was followed by Benjamin Webster's new farce, *Swiss Swains*, with music by Mueller. "The performances were very fair indeed," stated the *Bee* on the 22nd. "We have seen some of the characters better played; but it has rarely been our lot to witness a better general performance. There were no blunders; no stage waiting; no prompting." In *Rob Roy* on the second night Germon, the new singing actor, made his début as Frank Osbaldistone, Eliza Petrie appearing as Julia Mannering. This young actress had played in Mobile and St. Louis since she left the "Little Camp" in 1835 and was to prove a valuable addition to the company at the American. "Though she is not exactly 'the tallest girl in the cotton patch'," asserted the *Daily Picayune* of November 24, "she can sing 'The Banks of the Blue Moselle' and 'Liberty for Me' and play a wide range of business, too, with remarkable excellence."

The equestrian troupe made its first appearance on November 23 and henceforth until December 7, performances in the circle comprised part of the nightly bills. Sol Smith recalls incorrectly

that the American, "finding the St. Charles going it so strong on the horses," played nothing but the legitimate during the first month.<sup>2</sup>

Master Diamond began an engagement on November 25 and on the 28th Davenport, "from New York," entertained with imitations of Fanny Elssler in "La Cracovienne." The last night of the month saw a performance of *Town and Country*, Ludlow enacting his favorite role of Kit Cosey and Leicester, a newcomer, as Reuben Glenroy. Though rain kept many from witnessing the performance, the enthusiasm of those who attended induced the managers to bring out other "sterling plays." For the 7th they announced *Henry IV*, cast with Thorne as Falstaff, Ludlow as Hotspur, Farren as King Henry, Mrs. Farren as Lady Percy, and Mrs. Russell as Dame Quickly. The *Daily Picayune* of December 9 informs us that Thorne had been able to spend only three days on the part, yet the attempt was good. Ludlow's spirited impersonation of Hotspur was applauded throughout the evening.

Novelties were plentiful during mid-December. On the 8th came T. E. Wilks' burletta, *The Railroad Station*; on the 11th, *My Sister Kate* by Mark Lemon. The most ambitious of the new plays was Dion Boucicault's recent comedy, *London Assurance*, which, presented on December 12, antedated the St. Charles production by eight days. The advertisement stated that it was produced "with a strict regard to stage appointments" and from the *Daily Picayune* of the 14th, we learn that these included carpeted floors and expensive furniture "to an extent . . . as far as the patronage of the times will warrant." A week later the managers introduced Sheridan Knowles' *Old Maids*, a comedy which was less successful than his other plays.

The equestrian troupe made its seventh appearance of the month at a benefit for Master Hernandez on the 20th and returned on Christmas for a day performance. The Lapland Dwarfs opened on the latter date and they and the Ravel Family proved an "immense attraction" during the holiday season. They were succeeded by Herr Otto Motty, "the unapproachable Equestrian Gymnast," who juggled cannon balls on his shoulders as he galloped around the ring at full speed. These performances were hailed by all who saw them, and his engagement was extended to fifteen nights.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

The matinée on New Year's featured Otto Motty, Christian the Tyrolese singer, and the equestrians; the bill in the evening was made up of Charles Dance's new farce, *Alive and Merry*, and the popular *Paul Jones* of W. H. Wallack. A feature of the bill on January 2 was the appearance of the clown, George Stone, as Baptiste in *The Death Token*.

Levi North came on January 12 and thereafter appeared nightly with the equestrian troupe until their departure for Havana on the 24th.

The bills for January list several new plays. These were Charles Selby's melodrama, *Jacques Strop*, a sequel to the popular *Robert Macaire*, and A'Beckett's *Roof Scrambler*, a burlesque parody of the opera *La Somnambula*. In this Thorne made his first appearance as a prima donna, enacting the role of Molly Brown. Less than a week later came J. M. Field's *Schinder Eller*, "a highly concentrated burlesque opera founded on events which occurred (or might have occurred) in and about New Orleans during the 19th century." This travesty was a decided hit and was repeated nightly until the end of the month. At the benefit given Field on the 24th the program included another of his pieces, *Schaggs Family, or Stage Mad*.

This season was notable for its dramatic fare rather than for its stars. When James Hackett came to the American after his return from Mobile, he offered nothing that had not been played during an earlier engagement at the St. Charles. Herr Cline, the Swiss Brothers, and La Petite Carline began a five night engagement on February 2.

The most splendid of the season's productions was *The Naiad Queen*, a spectacle produced on February 12 under the direction of Joseph Foster. He had brought dresses, banners, and props with him from Philadelphia and in order to insure complete success the theatre remained closed while the cast rehearsed for two nights previous to the opening performance. The press had only praise for the acting and the scenery. The *Daily Picayune* (November 14) urged everyone to see it, assuring its readers that this was "no catch penny, no humbug brought out to suck in a credulous public." The spectacle saw ten nights and on February 22 was presented at a day performance "for the accommodation of children and families."

This was a winter of spectacles. The popular *Last Days of Pompeii* had a tenth performance on the 25th, and on the following night *Cherry and Fair Star* was revived. *The Naiad Queen* had its thirteenth presentation on the 28th when it was given for the benefit of Charles Smith, the scenic artist. Earlier in the evening Smith appeared in *Bombastes Furioso* as General Bombastes, "for the first and last time."

The equestrians were welcomed back from Havana on March 1 and for several nights thereafter they shared the stage with the popular *Naiad Queen*. Then on the 5th came *Rookwood*, another of Joseph Foster's productions, in which both the dramatic and equestrian companies participated.

The brightest of the stars was Mrs. Fitzwilliam who opened her engagement on March 9 with *Grandfather's Will* and *The Widow Wiggins*. J. B. Buckstone joined her the following evening in *My Old Woman* and *The Snapping Turtles*, and during the rest of the engagement the two continued in familiar roles.

The company benefits began after the stars left for Mobile on the 17th. Foster offered an interesting bill which included the first act of *Mazeppa*, the third act of *Rookwood*, and T. J. Dibdin's pantomime, *Mother Goose*.

The audiences at the American these last nights in March saw many new plays. On the 24th Eliza Petrie introduced *The Sentinel*, a musical farce by T. Mildenhall. Saunders' presentations were J. H. Payne's *The Fall of Algiers* and a burlesque, *The Lady of Irons*. As part of her bill Mrs. Farren featured Benjamin Webster's *Alpine Maid*. At the benefit tendered J. S. Browne on April 1, George Pitt's domestic drama, *The Last Man*, had its local première.

The lengths to which managers were forced to go to attract the public is shown in the program for March 27. The city was crowded with visitors who had come for the racing season and on this evening the American Theatre Plate was presented to the winner of the principal race of the day. The horse was led on the stage by its jockey to receive the award.

Visiting performers at this time were Mr. and Mrs. Bannister, last here in 1837 when they were members of the St. Charles company. Originally announced "for one night only,"

they remained for five. They opened in Bannister's *Robert Emmett* and during their brief visit introduced his recent plays: *The Syracusan Brothers*, *The Gentleman of Lyons*, and *The Maine Question*.

Mrs. Fitzwilliam and Buckstone commenced their farewell engagement on April 3 with *The Pet of the Petticoats* and *Foreign Airs and Native Graces*. To the plays which they had enacted on previous visits were now added Buckstone's new monopolylogue, *The Belle of the Hotel*, and the old favorite, *Roxalana*. Mrs. Fitzwilliam sustained seven characters in the new piece, among them being that of an American Fire Boy. Commented the *Daily Picayune* on April 9: "We think Fanny will yet find a better study for her Fire Boy."

On April 12, after the departure of the stars, the theatre was turned over to H. G. Pearson, for a complimentary benefit tendered by "some of the gentlemen of New Orleans." His portrayal of Reuben Glenroy (*Town and Country*) and King Charles (*Charles XII*) were witnessed by an audience which included the Honorable Martin Van Buren and his friend James Kirk Paulding. It may have been the presence of the noted strangers and not the popularity of this former member of the St. Charles company that filled the theatre and brought receipts estimated at eleven or twelve hundred dollars.

The last of the spectacular novelties was M. R. Lacy's *Napoleon Bonaparte* produced by Foster on April 13. The notices proclaimed this drama "the most intricate and difficult ever attempted on the Southern stage." The equestrian troupe was increased and a hundred supernumeraries were engaged for the production. It ran through the 23rd when Foster took a benefit. He and Robinson, the equestrian leader, had decided to join forces for a summer campaign and the following night the equestrians bade farewell.<sup>3</sup>

The remaining few weeks of the season were devoted to revivals of popular comedies, farces, and melodramas. The old favorite, *Animal Magnetism*, "altered and adapted to suit the present time," was presented on May 13. During the play several interesting and convincing experiments in mesmerism were given by two professors who were said to have studied the science "especially with the intention of operating on this occasion." Doubt-

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Picayune*, April 23, 1842.

less the theatre was crowded on this night and on many others during the first weeks in May for, "in consideration of the pressure of the time," the managers had reduced the price of admission, boxes and parquet now being fifty cents, gallery and parterre, twenty-five. The regular prices were resumed on the 19th but were again cut on the night of Sol Smith's benefit.

This performance on May 24, 1842, brought the season to a close. The members of the company participated in a free benefit for the Orphan Boys on the 25th, and the next day they left for St. Louis. On July 30 the American Theatre was fired by an incendiary and burned to the ground.

#### CONCLUSION

The destruction of the American Theatre on July 30, 1842, left the English drama without a regular home in New Orleans. However, the city was not without theatrical entertainment. While James Caldwell and Ludlow and Smith made preparations for the reconstruction of their houses, a small company managed by H. Corri and Roley Marks offered music and vaudevilles in a theatre which they had fitted up in Tivoli Garden, "formerly known as Hubert's Garden." In the fall the troupe moved into the Athenaeum on Camp Street and performed here until December 5, when the opening of Caldwell's new theatre apparently brought about its disbanding.

After the burning of the St. Charles in March, James Caldwell announced various plans for its rebuilding and throughout the summer the newspapers carried references to the opera house which he intended to erect on the site of his old theatre.<sup>4</sup> The fall, however, brought news of his having rented the theatre which Dubois and Kendig were building on Poydras Street,<sup>5</sup> and on December 5, the New American opened under his management. On hearing of this, Ludlow and Smith, who had understood that the theatre was to be theirs, immediately arranged for the reconstruction and the leasing of the St. Charles, negotiating with the Gas Bank, which owned the lot.<sup>6</sup>

The New St. Charles opened on January 18, 1843. A few days before this Caldwell had withdrawn from the management of the New American, thus leaving Ludlow and Smith to dominate the theatrical scene.<sup>7</sup> Their rise to power marks the beginning of a new era in the history of the English theatre at New Orleans.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, June 17, August 16, 24, 1842.

<sup>5</sup> *Commercial Bulletin*, September 24, 1842.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, 168; Ludlow, *op. cit.*, 554.

<sup>7</sup> *Daily Picayune*, January 8, 14, 1843.

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## ✓ LOUISIANA'S ADMINISTRATION OF SWAMP LAND FUNDS

By SAM MIMS

THE UNITED STATES PAID \$15,000,000 FOR THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

In spite of proclamations issued by the Spanish governors of the Louisiana Province, frontiersmen of Ohio and Kentucky kept on using the Mississippi River. Paying no attention to the irate dons of New Orleans, these brawny woodsmen continued to float their rafts, flatboats, and keelboats down the river, bringing to New Orleans great cargoes of pelts, furs, wheat, corn and tobacco. Spain's declarations of complete ownership of the liquid highway had no deterring effect upon these men who had products to sell and who knew where to sell them—the thriving city near the mouth of the mighty stream.

The controversy was bringing threats of war when Thomas Jefferson began a careful study of the stream—writing letters, asking questions, reading reports. At last he reached a definite conclusion. “Undoubtedly this is the greatest artery of transportation in all the world,” the brilliant man ventured to say. Then came visions and dreams.

The United States needed that great river. Spain and France were broke. Why not start negotiations for the purchase of the Louisiana Territory in order to get control of the Mississippi?

The forests and delta lands that spread for unknown miles on both sides of the river were not alluring to Jefferson and many of his contemporaries. It was the great water highway that caused them to bring negotiations to a close. The land and forests were of no consequence.

### LOUISIANA'S HEROIC ATTEMPTS

French farmers who settled along the shores of the Mississippi undertook to build dikes to protect their lands from overflow. They assumed a task that was impossible for them, but their heroic struggles is an epic in Louisiana history. After transfer of the Louisiana Territory to the United States riparian proprietors coordinated their efforts to protect themselves and their property. Later, the parishes that bordered the stream at-

tempted to relieve the farmers of their herculean burden. Eventually the State accepted the responsibility. But "Old Man Ribber" kept on a-rolling along, at unpredictable intervals bringing death and destruction to those who had shown the temerity to conquer him.

In his book under the title, *A History of Public Land Policy*, Benjamin Horace Hibbard sets out very clearly and succinctly the conditions that existed in Louisiana prior to the Act of 1849 which provided for the granting of swamp lands to this state:

In order to prevent the overflow of the Mississippi, Louisiana had resorted to a system of artificial embankments, embracing approximately 1,400 miles of levees, and constructed at a cost of at least twenty million dollars. *This expenditure by the state had resulted in reclamation of over three million acres of public land which the Government had sold, the proceeds going to the National Treasury.*

#### THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGED NO RESPONSIBILITY

For many decades after the Louisiana purchase the Congress of the United States refused to make any determined effort to protect from inundation the vast domain of forests and delta lands, nor did they show any disposition to save from destruction the thousands of people who were struggling to conquer the wilderness and bring it into agricultural and industrial use. The one and only acknowledged duty of the Federal Government was to improve the river for commercial purposes. The owners of this instrumentality of destruction recognized no responsibility for its acts of violence. So far as Congress was concerned this mighty possession of the United States was at liberty to recruit all of its devastating forces and hurtle down upon thousands of citizens and sweep them into eternity. The only duty of Congress was to keep the river navigable. To appropriate money to share in the cost of building levees to protect the land from overflow was unconstitutional if not unthinkable.

#### GOVERNMENT AID FOR LAND RECLAMATION

The earliest effort to make swamp lands the subject of national legislation occurred in 1826. A resolution was passed by the Senate providing for a report showing the quantities and location of wet, marshy, and inundated public lands in Missouri and Illinois; and upon the information thus obtained, measures were proposed for ceding these lands to the two states.

By the passage of an act in February, 1849, members of Congress expressed a desire to aid the State of Louisiana in reclaiming overflow areas by donating what was considered to be worthless lands. Congress may have been imbued with a benevolent and altruistic spirit when it provided the way for granting "the whole of such lands that may be found unfit for cultivation," with the provision that the proceeds from the sale of such lands "shall be applied exclusively, as far as necessary, to the construction of levees and drains for their reclamation."

Congressman John H. Harmanson, Senators Henry Johnson and Solomon W. Downs, all from Louisiana, were very aggressive in their support of the bill that proposed the donation of these unfit-for-cultivation lands, arguing that the draining of swamp lands would "remove the prolific source of disease," and would greatly enhance the value of Government lands in Louisiana.

The National Government had sold, prior to June, 1820, 19,399,158 acres of land lying within eight states that comprised the greater part of the original Louisiana Territory, only 45,277 acres of which were in Louisiana. The Government still owned considerable of the land in this State, therefore, the argument that something should be done to enhance the value of such holdings found receptive ears. An adequate levee and drainage system would certainly increase the demand for Government-owned property in Louisiana.

But the act of 1849 contained no acknowledgment that the Federal Government was charged with the duty of protecting citizens and their property from devastating floods, although Congress was aware of the fact that the greater part of the flood waters came from watersheds and tributaries far beyond the borders of Louisiana. In donating unfit-for-cultivation lands Congress only hoped the various states might be able to develop a system of protection against inundation.

The Act of February, 1849, which applied exclusively to Louisiana, was followed by another law that made provision for the granting of similar lands to all other states of the Union in which overflow areas were found. This law, passed by the Thirty-first Congress, approved September 28, 1850, is known as "The Swamp Land Act."

In debating and discussing this bill the members of Congress made it clear that their reasons for such proposed grants were

the worthless character of the lands in their undrained condition, their unhealthful effects and the enhancement of value of adjoining Government property. These lawmakers estimated that the area of lands involved would be approximately 5,000,000 acres. Their figures were not very accurate.

Up to June 30, 1822, the total amount of land covered by the claims reported under the swamp land grants is over 83,000,000 acres, 63,931,060 of which have been patented. Of this total amount of area, 9,384,626 acres of swamp land have been patented to the State of Louisiana. In addition to this large area there have been granted to twelve swamp-land states 734,385 acres of indemnity lands, and the total sum of \$2,095,468.79 as cash indemnity in lieu of lands which would otherwise have been granted. To Louisiana there have been granted 32,630 acres of indemnity lands and the sum of \$53,118.65 as cash indemnity in lieu of land.

Many serious attempts have been made in Congress to initiate a comprehensive program of drainage and levee construction. Throughout the years there have always been members of Congress and other officials in Washington who have sponsored legislation that would enable the National Government to inaugurate a system of flood control. In the United States Senate Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun supported an appropriation bill that had for its specific purpose the building of levees along the Mississippi to protect the area from inundation. Henry Clay believed this a national duty, as the following excerpt from one of his famous speeches will show:

How long will it be before the people of this vast valley will rise en masse and tumble down your little hair-splitting distinctions about what is national, and demand what is just and fair on the part of this government in relation to their great interests? The Mississippi, with all its tributaries, constitutes a part of a great system, and if the system be not national I should like to know one that is national. We are told that a little work, great in its value, one for which I shall vote with great pleasure, the breakwater in the little State of Delaware, is a great national work, while a work which has for its object the improvement of that vast system of rivers which constitute the valley of the Mississippi, which is to save millions and millions of property and many human lives, is not a work to be done because not national!

In a message to Congress, President Chester A. Arthur said:

It may not be inopportune to mention that this government has imposed and collected some \$70,000,000 by a tax on cotton in the production of which the population of the lower Mississippi is largely engaged, and it does not seem inequitable to return a portion of this tax to those who contributed it, particularly as such action will also result in an important gain to the country at large, and especially so to the great rich States of the Northwest and the Mississippi Valley.

From an editorial that appeared in *The Commoner* on April 11, 1913, no doubt written by William Jennings Bryan, it is obvious that flood control along the Mississippi was becoming a serious national question:

For years the people of the lower Mississippi and those living at intersections of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers have been subjected to losses and great inconveniences through floods. There has been considerable discussion and some effort in a small way to relieve these conditions. The recent floods will serve to direct attention to a duty the discharge of which has all too long been neglected. Engineers agree that the bad conditions referred to could be prevented through the application of laws with which engineers are familiar. The sections affected by these floods lie in the very heart of the United States and it goes without saying that extraordinary efforts ought to be made to protect these sections. The work of protection should be commenced in earnest and should be carried to successful conclusion even though it requires an enterprise on a scale so large as the Panama Canal. A comprehensive engineering plan will provide the people living in the heart of America with protection from floods. This is the opinion of experienced engineers. The good work can not be commenced any too soon. Such an enterprise is in harmony with the pledge given by the democratic national convention for 1912.

Let this platform plank be faithfully carried out.

In his address accepting the nomination of the Democratic Party, Woodrow Wilson said:

In the case of the Mississippi River, that great central artery of our trade, it is plain that the Federal Government must build and maintain the levees and keep the great waters in harness for the general use. . . . Such expenditures are not largess on the part of the government; they are national investments.

Long before Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated President of the United States, engineers had reported to Congress that levees were an aid to navigation, in that they were a useful auxiliary to channel improvement. These statements, supported by expert opinion, offered an indirect means of aiding the states along the Mississippi; they silenced to some extent the bickerings over the hair-splitting arguments referred to by Henry Clay. Those who sponsored appropriations to improve navigation no longer had to convince colleagues that it would be unconstitutional to appropriate money that would save people and their property from being swept into the Gulf. Congress had always maintained, in effect, that so long as the water of the Mississippi remained within its channels it belonged to the United States to use and control, but whenever this same water broke away from its bounds to go on a destructive rampage it belonged to the poor fellow who tried to stop it.

#### CONFLICTS BETWEEN LAND CLAIMANTS

Although the work of segregating swamp lands was undertaken immediately after the Swamp Land Act became operative, in most states several years elapsed before a great many selections were made and approved. Meanwhile the laws for the private and public sales and locations of public lands remained operative, and the local government offices disposed of tracts which afterwards were selected and claimed as swamp land. In many cases the state also sold the same land, and granted its title. A large number of conflicts arose. As early as 1856 over 700,000 acres in the twelve beneficiary states were in dispute, and the trouble continued for many years afterwards.

To protect those who had acquired land from the National Government, Congress, by Act approved March 2, 1855, provided for the settlement of these conflicts and authorized indemnifications for the various states. For swamp lands sold by the government the state was to receive the purchase money; in case of an existing claim the privilege was given of making a selection of a similar quantity from any of the public lands subject to entry at \$1.25 or less per acre. Out of this Act originated the nomenclature, "indemnity lands," and "cash indemnity."

#### FRAUD AND SPECULATION

The purpose of "The Swamp Land Act" was to aid the states in reclaiming their overflow lands by the construction of levees and drains. Its object was not to enrich the state or to encourage

speculation on the part of individuals. However, there were no clauses in the Act that made this form of improvement a condition precedent to the acquisition of titles by the states.

The record charges that all of the twelve states that became beneficiaries under "The Swamp Land Act" perpetrated stupendous frauds upon the National Government by laying claims to valuable lands that had never been inundated. Members of Congress were involved in these scandals, particularly those who appeared on commissions in support of claims made by the states. There was feverish attempt to get as much land as possible. One *Congressional Record* charges: "Taking advantage of the great extent of actual swamp land in Florida, the state agents selected as swamp land whole townships which upon investigation were found to be substantially dry." But the most serious charges were against Missouri whose governor was accused, in 1855, of having used his influence to obtain the grant of a large tract of land under utterly false claims, provoking to indignation the editor of the *New York Semi-Weekly Tribune*:

Now, we ask the people of the United States whether the policy of administration shall prevail and Missouri steal more than two hundred thousand acres of land under the act of 1850, or whether a half million of dollars shall be paid into the public treasury for these so-called swamp lands. Thousands of acres in this land district, worth from five to ten dollars per acre, would be contested, but for the decision of the commissioner refusing to give the contestant the preference right at the ordinary cash price over the speculator.

Iowa, Illinois and Ohio appear frequently in the record of charges of frauds and swindles. The *Iowa State Register* of April 17, 1872, discovered that new technique was to be applied in perpetrating the same old frauds:

Most Iowans are only too familiar with the swamp land swindles that disgraced the state some years ago, and we had hoped that the day of such things was over, but we are credibly informed that a certain ring has been formed to reopen these old swindles with variations. The plan of operation is this: Believing that the old sales of swamp and indemnity lands were in many cases irregular and may be set aside by the courts, they combine with the County Supervisors, where they can find inexperienced men, and get up a second sale for a small consideration; then they intend to carry the matter into the Courts where they will attempt to have the old sale set aside, and if successful, share the profits of the speculation.

This might be well enough if the title to the lands was still vested in the old purchasers, but unfortunately these lands are nearly all in the hands of innocent parties and settlers who will be ruined by the defeat of their title. They have in most cases paid taxes for eight or ten years and their lands are now worth from five to fifteen dollars per acre.

Many years later one of our Congressmen expressed the opinion that had "The Swamp Land Act" been honestly administered the Nation as a whole and particularly the states involved would have been greatly benefited. "But I feel confident," the gentleman said, "taking the whole of the public-land states together, that a very grave mistake was made in their enactment, and I think from the time of their enactment to the present day they have wrought more evil than good, and have been, in fact, a source of misfortune to most, if not all, the states to which those laws applied."

There is now a widespread sentiment that something definite should be done to make swamp lands available for agricultural purposes. Regardless of who owns them, or whether the ownership be public or private, there are about 80,000,000 acres of swamp lands in the United States, a great portion of which can be drained and made ready for cultivation. Whether the grants of swamp lands were wise or unwise, the original bases for these donations still exist. At the present time there is considerable sentiment in favor of making the reclamation of swamp lands a national duty. "If it is just and right to irrigate the arid lands, it is equally right and just that the government contribute toward the drainage of the lowlands," Benjamin Hibbard declared.

It can also be said that if it is just and right to terrace eroded and impoverished hill lands, it is equally right and just that the government contribute toward the drainage of lowlands. Particularly is this true of Louisiana, for some of our most fertile lands need only to be drained to make them immensely valuable to agriculture.

Although Louisiana failed to achieve the results anticipated by members of Congress in 1849 and 1850, certainly she administered the funds derived from the sale of swamp lands more nearly in accordance with the objectives set up by the Swamp Land Acts than did any of the other eleven beneficiary states.

HOW LOUISIANA HAS HANDLED SWAMP LAND FUNDS

The first law passed by the Louisiana legislature to make available the funds to be derived from the sale of lands granted by the Federal Government was Act 248 of 1852, which authorized the Register of the State Land Office and the State Treasurer to sell warrants "for one million acres of land, to be located on the swamp or overflow lands donated by acts of Congress . . . said warrants to be issued for not more than 640 acres and not less than 40 acres; . . . the same shall not be sold for less than \$1.25 per acre."

This act gave any white man over twenty-one years of age and who was the head of a family the privilege of entering not less than 40 acres nor more than 320 acres by agreeing to pay within twelve months the price of \$1.25 per acre, and also specified certain acts of possession as a prerequisite to final ownership. Under this law the Register was made the judge to settle any conflicting claims that might arise, by determining who was the first person "locating or settling thereon." He was also assigned the duty of procuring plats or map "of all the swamp lands donated to Louisiana." He was required to "keep a well bound book in his office, in which shall be entered in proper form all the land thus sold, and for what price, which said book and maps shall be carefully preserved, and shall be deemed official records."

This Act also appropriated the sum of seven thousand dollars to be taken out of the fund derived from the sale of donated swamp lands or from the sale of warrants, to be used to defray "expenses required by this act." It provided that the Register of the Land Office and the State Treasurer "shall be entitled to receive such fees as are now paid by the United States to its officers in this State, for the performance of similar duties."

Sections eight and nine of this Act 248 of 1852 are particularly important in relation to subsequent laws regarding the Swamp Land Fund and the manner in which such money was used.

Section 8. *Be It Further Enacted, etc.,* That the net proceeds from the sales of said swamp or overflow lands, or warrants thereof, shall be held by the State as a special fund, to be applied to levying and such drainage as may be necessary for the reclamation of said swamp and overflow lands, in conformity with the terms of said donations.

Section 9. *Be It Further Enacted, etc.*, That all levees which may hereafter be made, and shall be selected by the State as a part of her general levee system, shall be paid out of the proceeds of the sales arising under the provisions of this act.

This law (Act 248 of 1852) was amended by Act 37 of 1853 for the purpose of giving to aggrieved settlers and purchasers of warrants the right to appeal their cases to "the District Court of the parish in which the land is situated." Under the amended law the Register was the court of last resort in settling conflicting claims of preference rights to any of the land donated by Congress. Act 37 of 1853 also prescribed the procedure which the aggrieved person was to follow in presenting his case to the district court. It did not relieve the Register of the duties assigned to him under the previous law.

Act 56 of 1853 was for the purpose of extending the time allowed by Act 248 of 1852 for actual settlers to make proof of payment and possession, also setting out the manner in which such proof should be made, requiring all who applied for a preference right to "make oath before some officer of the State qualified to administer same, that he or she had settled on the land applied for, that the view and purpose was for cultivating same, and not for the purpose of speculation, and state, as near as may be, the date of such settlement, which oath, as to the location and settlement, shall be sustained by the affidavit of two disinterested witnesses."

Act 141 of 1853 provided an appropriation of the sum of \$2,871.12 out of the Swamp Land Fund for the payment of commissions due the Register and Receiver of the Land Office.

However, during that session of the Legislature a supplementary act was passed (Act 189 of 1853) for the purpose of qualifying Act No. 37 and making it applicable only "to such lands as are not approved or patented to the State of Louisiana, and to such lands as are not approved or patented, if no warrant is located or entry made by them before the person filing his or her application for preference right, had settled thereon."

Act 189 also imposed upon the Governor the duty of publishing a proclamation that would "give notice to all persons entitled to preemption rights . . . on any state lands, to file their

application and proof with the Register of the State Land Office within ninety days from the date of the proclamation, or the state lands shall be subject to private entry without reservation."

It is interesting to note that section 5 of Act 189 provided, "That the costs of publication required by this Act shall be paid out of the Swamp Land Fund." Even so, the first appropriation for levee purposes is found in Act 233 of 1853, the title of which declares that "the completing of the rebuilding of the Grand Levee in the Parish of Point Coupée is absolutely necessary for the protection of nearly one-third of the State of Louisiana from inundation."

Of the \$30,000 appropriated under this Act, \$5,000 was made "subject to the control of the Engineer, or Swamp Land Commission of the Second District, to repair any damage which may be likely to cause a crevasse during the present stage of high water."

Act 328 set up the machinery for operations in Louisiana. It divided the State into three levee and drainage districts and provided the forming of a commission to be composed of a member from each district, limiting their term of office, fixing their salaries and the amount of bond each member must give, providing the commission with a secretary and designating the time and place for their meetings; also to make mandatory the appointment of an engineer for each of said districts and fixing their salaries, and to authorize the commission to appoint inspectors, "when they deem it necessary."

Through the passage of this Act, No. 328 of 1853, the Legislature showed clearly their desire to conform to the purposes of "The Swamp Land Acts," and therein they expressed their determination to use the money derived from the sale of donated overflow lands in a manner that would result in the best possible drainage of such areas, and they made provisions for a levee system that seemed practical and sound, with no apparent intent to use such funds for purposes other than those expressed in the acts of Congress.

• Section 10 of this Act provided, "that it shall be the duty of said engineers, in their respective districts, to determine the locality, extent and dimensions of the necessary levees and drains to protect and reclaim Swamp Lands for the State; provided, that when any objections shall be made by the proprietor of the

land where the levee is to be made, as to the locality of said levee, then the same shall be fixed by the engineer, in conjunction with three landholders, to be taken from amongst the nearest neighbors to said property selected, one by the proprietor, and the other by said engineer, and the third by two others selected."

Section 11 of this Act provided, "that it shall be the duty of each of said engineers to lay off his district into as many levee wards and drainage districts as circumstances may require, and to make a full and detailed report thereof to the commissioners at such time as they may require."

Other sections of this Act detailed the method by which advertising for lowest bids for construction work should be made, and the manner in which the lowest bidder should make bond to assure strict adherence to specifications prepared by the engineer on each drainage and levee job to be done.

Ever since the first settlers began cultivating lands along the Mississippi River in Louisiana, the riparian owners had assumed the responsibility of protecting their property against inundation. For generations the progeny of these early settlers had fought heroically to hold their levees intact during periods of high water.

The members of the Legislature of 1853 were well informed on the history of these riparian proprietors and must have known that they would continue to participate in the struggle to hold the powerful stream in restraint in times of stress. Swamp land funds could not entirely relieve them of their obligations. The law-makers must have had these facts in mind when they wrote section 16 of Act No. 328 of 1853:

That the engineers, and in the event of their absence, the inspectors, are hereby empowered, in case of a crevasse, or threatened crevasse, to requisition all the male slaves above the age of fifteen years and under sixty, or so many thereof as may be necessary, whose owners reside on the same side of the river or bayou, within seven miles of the threatened danger, provided that this shall not apply to any person being on the highlands, that is lands not alluvial; and whenever the owner of said slave or slaves, or his agent or overseer, shall refuse or neglect to furnish the slaves required by the engineer or inspector, then in that event the owner shall pay five dollars per day for each slave not sent under said requisition; said amount to be due to said

commissioners, and recoverable in their name before any competent court, and to be paid into the Treasury of the State, *and constitute a part of the Swamp Land Fund.* That whenever any slave or slaves may be furnished upon the requisition referred to in this section, the owner of the slave or slaves shall be entitled to demand and receive as compensation for his or their services, at the rate of one dollar and fifty cents per day for each day and every slave, payable out of the Swamp Land Fund, except the owner of the land upon which the crevasse occurs or threatens to occur, who is not to be compensated or entitled to the compensation allowed by this section. And provided further, that in all cases when slaves are thus called out, the engineer or inspector shall call upon the owners of slaves, within the above mentioned distance, in proportion to the number owned by such proprietor; provided the said compensation shall only apply to works constructed under the provisions of this act.

The three districts into which the State was divided are described in this Act:

That all of that part of the State south of the 31st. degree of north latitude, and east of the Mississippi River, shall constitute the First District; all that part south of the 31st. degree of north latitude, and west of the Mississippi River, shall constitute the Second District; and all that part of the State north of the 31st. degree of north latitude, and west of the Mississippi River, including the parishes of Avoyelles and Rapides, shall constitute the Third District.

This Act also prorated the money to be derived from the sale of lands as follows: "Provided, that the funds arising from the sale of swamp and overflowed lands shall be divided among the several districts in the following proportions, viz.: To the First District, two-eighths; to the Second District, three-eighths; to the Third District, three-eighths."

The Swamp Land Commissioners were required to file their report on or before the first day of January of each year, and the Governor to transmit it to the General Assembly. Their recommendations for future work were to be contained in this report, setting out why, in their opinion, specific operations were necessary and to "recommend the adoption of such means as to them may seem necessary for the protection of the alluvial lands and the drainage and reclamation of the same."

This Act authorized the Governor to borrow as much as a million dollars by issuing bonds, maturing from ten to twenty years after date of issue, and bearing interest at the rate of 6%

per annum, "the bonds to be numbered as issued, in sums of one thousand dollars, and to be paid in the order of their number, the State reserving the right at any time, when there are funds on hand to be applied to the payment of said bonds, to redeem the same."

This law made it clear that other funds were not encumbered by these outstanding bonds:

Should the proceeds of the sale of swamp and overflow lands mentioned in this Act be insufficient to meet the payment of bonds issued as above, the said bonds shall not be considered as having any claim on the State Treasury for their payment, nor shall the holders of said bonds be considered as having the right to look to any other than the swamp land fund for their redemption.

Salaries of commissioners, \$1500 a year for each, also the salaries of engineers and others "in carrying out the provisions of this Act shall be paid out of the sale of swamp land," and this law made it quite plain that any debts incurred in carrying out the provisions contained therein, also the salaries of commissioners and those persons employed by them, must be paid out of the funds derived from sales of lands donated by congress; that no contracts or debts "shall ever become a charge on any other fund in the State Treasury than those arising from the sale of swamp lands."

In 1857 the Legislature established a scale of prices on swamp lands within the parishes of Claiborne, Bienville, Jackson, Union, Winn, Washington, St. Helena and St. Tammany. All lands that had been open for entry for a period of five years were valued at seventy-five cents per acre, and all lands which had "been in market for ten years or upwards . . . and still remaining unsold, shall be subject to entry and sale at the price of fifty cents per acre," and all lands that had been "in market" for fifteen years, "shall be subject to entry and sale at the price of twenty-five cents per acre."

Two years later a similar scale of prices was established for swamp lands within the parishes of Bossier, De Soto, Sabine, and Natchitoches.

These prices were changed by Section 10 of Act 75 of 1880, which provided:

That the public lands, donated by Congress to the State of Louisiana, shall be subject to entry and sale, at the rate of

seventy-five cents per acre, for any number of acres; and any person making affidavit that he or she enters for his or her own use, and for the purpose of actual settlement and cultivating, and together with the said entry, he or she has not acquired from the State of Louisiana, under the provisions of this or any act graduating State land, more than one hundred and sixty acres, according to the established surveys, shall be allowed to enter one hundred and sixty acres at the rate of twelve and one-half cents per acre.

At various sessions of the Legislature between 1852 and 1870 numerous acts were passed to appropriate, out of the Swamp Land Fund, money to be used for specific purposes. Act 171 of 1859 provided the use of \$20,000 out of the funds belonging to the First Swamp Land District, "to make certain surveys for drainage." During this session of the Legislature the sum of \$5,000 was appropriated out of the Swamp Land Fund "for the execution of surveys necessary to the calculation of the area of lands listed to the State under the swamp land grants, whose contents cannot now be determined because of imperfection in the U. S. Surveys."

Soon after passing the Swamp Land Acts the Commissioner of the U. S. Land Office submitted to the several state authorities two methods of designating swamp lands: (1) The field notes of government survey could be taken as a basis for selections, and all lands shown by them to be swamp or overflow lands, which were vacant and unappropriated, would pass to the states; (2) The states could select the lands by their own agents and report them to the Surveyor General with proof as to their character. Louisiana elected to adopt the second method, that is, to make selections by its own agents. From time to time conflicts occurred between the State and the National Government in regard to the segregation of swamp and overflow lands from the total area of government land, nevertheless, the record does not disclose that there was ever an attempt on the part of Louisiana's operatives to perpetrate such frauds as were charged against many of the other states. Nor do the appropriations of the Legislature, throughout the years, appear to have departed from the purposes that Congress had in mind when the swamp land acts were passed.

Act 52 of 1860 is similar to many others in which money was appropriated for specific purposes, all of which appear to have been in conformity to the provisions of the Swamp Land Act.

"The sum of \$2,000 be, and is hereby appropriated out of the Swamp Land Fund to reclaim and drain swamp lands in the parish of St. Mary."

Act 38 of 1870 covered many subjects, most of which were related to the general program of handling swamp lands. It provided a reorganization of the State Land Office, empowering the Governor to appoint the Register for a term of four years at an annual salary of four thousand dollars to be paid out of the State Treasury and not out of the Swamp Land Fund; it also provided him with a clerk, fixed his salary, and designated the location of the State Land Office to be in Baton Rouge.

The record does not disclose any reason for reducing the Register's salary ten years later to the annual stipend of fifteen hundred dollars, which must "be paid out of the swamp land fund only," for Act 75 of 1880 certainly did not relieve him of any duties assigned him in previous law. In addition to this reduction of salary, Section 5 of the Act presented some harsh warnings:

That the Register of the State Land Office shall, on the sale of lands or warrants, describe the same in his order on the Treasurer of the State to receive the money for said lands, and in no case shall an entry be made upon the books, maps or other official record until the receipt of the Treasurer, also describing the land or warrants, has been submitted and filed in his office; a violation of this section shall be deemed a felony, and upon conviction the party offending shall pay a fine of five thousand dollars and be imprisoned for a term not exceeding ten nor less than two years. . . .

But in 1904 this law was amended by Act 193 which provided that the Register of the State Land Office should be chosen by vote of the people at the general State elections.

Returning to Act 38 of 1870 and its many ramifications we find that it also established graduated prices on swamp lands in a number of parishes; however, its most interesting provisions are found in Section 21:

That as there are many bodies of land which have been approved in bulk to the State of Louisiana by the general government, as swamp and overflow lands, through which the township and section lines have not been run, so as to prevent the same to be subject to pre-emption or sale, it shall be the duty of the Register to be appointed under this act,

to request the Surveyor General of the United States to permit the State of Louisiana to have such surveys made thereof, as may be necessary, in accordance with the existing laws and regulations governing such work.

One of the many things accomplished by this law was the appropriation of ten thousand dollars out of the Swamp Land Fund "for work to be done as provided in section twenty-first of this act."

Ten years later the State felt aggrieved because some of the swamp lands in Louisiana had "been illegally disposed of by the Federal government, and other portions, though listed to the State, have been improperly suspended or rejected by the Federal government and the approval to the State refused." Whereupon, the Legislature, by Act 23 of 1880, authorized the Governor "to employ counsel to assert the rights of the State to lands donated to the State by the Federal government, or to recover the value of said lands in money or scrip." Apropos of this act, a concurrent resolution was adopted, "instructing our Senators and Representatives in Congress to make diligent efforts to hasten and procure a definite settlement of certain claims the State has against the general government growing out of acts of Congress granting lands to this State."

#### THE BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS

The Board of Swamp Land Commissioners, created by Act 328 of 1853, continued to function for only six years, that law having been repealed by Act 279 of 1859, section 22 of which declared: "The office of the present Board of Swamp Land Commissioners, and of the State Engineers shall expire and their offices be abolished." This repealing act also created a Board of Public Works and transferred to it the functions originally attributed to the Board of Swamp Land Commissioners.

But before reviewing the history of the Board of Public Works it seems necessary to mention the donation that Congress made to the Territory of Orleans on February 16, 1811. To advance the construction of roads and levees, five per centum of the proceeds from the sale of public lands lying within the Territory were designated for such purposes. In order to administer those funds the Legislature, by act of March 20, 1826, created a Board of Internal Improvements:

That there shall be created for the State of Louisiana, a board to be denominated the Board of Internal Improve-

ments, and to consist of five commissioners to be nominated annually by the Governor and appointed by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

The Governor was made an ex-officio member of this board whose duties were to be: "To ascertain what works ought, in the general interest of the State, to be recommended, such as the clearing of rivers and bayous, digging of canals, opening of roads, etc., and to make reports as hereinafter provided. . . . They shall select among the said improvements those which, in their opinion, ought to be undertaken first." They were also given authority to order the surveyor general of the State to make necessary surveys, plans and estimates, and to render a detailed report to the General Assembly. The members of the board were to draw no salaries, but nine thousand dollars were appropriated to cover their expenses.

Seven years later the Board of Internal Improvements was abolished and in its stead a Board of Public Works was established. Even so, the nomenclature "Internal Improvements" continued to find a place in subsequent legislation, and later in the Constitution.

An act approved March 16, 1848, section 1, provided: "That the unexpended balance, together with all that may hereafter be received from the five per centum of the *net* proceeds of the sale of public lands of the United States in this State, appropriated by the fifth section of an Act of Congress approved February 16, 1811, for roads and levees, be, and the same is hereby set apart for that purpose, to be called 'Road and Levee Fund.'"

Section 2. "That the unexpended balance in the Treasury, together with all that may hereafter be received from the proceeds of public lands granted to the State by an Act of Congress, approved September 4, 1841, shall be set apart as a special fund, to be called the 'Internal Improvement Fund.'"

This act divided the State into four Internal Improvement districts. It appropriated out of the Internal Improvement Fund the sum of \$28,000, "for the purpose of purchasing an additional number of slaves, to increase the State force." It ordered the State Engineer to acquire six boats and set out in detail where and how such boats were to be used.

This act of 1848 does not mention the act approved March 4, 1833, the title of which reveals its purpose to "incorporate a Board of Public Works, and to create a fund for Internal Improvements."

The fund "created" was the amount of \$20,000, a part of which was to come from "amounts that have been or may be received agreeably to an act of Congress, approved February 16, 1811."

The Governor was made an ex-officio member of the Board of Public Works, to be composed of "nine citizens, of whom three shall reside in each of the present congressional districts." The act provided for a "sub-board, who shall during the recess of the Board of Public Works, exercise such control over the management and expenditures of the fund for internal improvement . . . subject to the orders and regulations of the Board of Public Works." This sub-board was composed of the Governor, the Treasurer, and the Attorney General.

Members of the Board of Public Works were appointed annually by the Governor. They were to hold meetings, two each year, in the city of New Orleans, with expenses paid, but were not to receive any salaries.

Although Governor A. B. Roman spoke very highly of the accomplishments of this board, it was abolished during the succeeding administration, and not actually revived until 1859, seven years after the Constitution of 1852 directed the Legislature to set up another agency under that name.

#### CONSTITUTION OF 1852

##### TITLE VI

##### *Internal Improvements*

Art. 130. There shall be a board of public works, to consist of four commissioners. The State shall be divided by the legislature into four districts, containing as nearly as may be an equal number of voters, and one commissioner shall be elected in each district by the legal voters thereof for the term of four years; but, of the first elected, two, to be designated by lot, shall remain in office for two years only.

Art. 131. The general assembly, at its first session after the adoption of this constitution, shall provide for the election and compensation of the commissioners and the organization of the board. The commissioners first elected shall assemble on a day to be appointed by law, and decide by lot the order in which their terms of service shall expire.

Art. 132. The commissioners shall exercise a diligent and faithful supervision of all public works in which the State may be interested, except those made by joint-stock

companies. They shall communicate to the general assembly, from time to time, their views concerning the same, and recommend such measures as they may deem necessary, in order to employ to the best advantage and for the purposes for which they were granted, the swamps and overflowed lands conveyed by the United States to this State. They shall appoint all officers engaged on the public works, and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by law.

Art. 133. The commissioners may be removed by the concurrent vote of a majority of all the members elected to each house of the general assembly; but the cause of the removal shall be entered on the journal of each house.

Art. 134. The general assembly shall have power, by a vote of three-fifths of the members elected to each house, to abolish said board, whenever in their opinion a board of public works shall no longer be necessary.

In spite of the injunctions of Title VI of the Constitution of 1852, the Legislature did not establish a Board of Public Works until the session of 1859, at which time Act 279 was passed. This board was to be composed of four commissioners, one elected from each of the four districts, formed under the Act as follows:

The State of Louisiana is hereby divided into four internal improvement, Leveeing, Drainage and reclaiming Districts, as follows, to wit:

First, Those parishes which now compose the First Swamp Land District, shall constitute the First District.

Second, Those parishes which now compose the Second Swamp Land District, shall constitute the Second District.

Third, Those parishes which now compose the Third Swamp Land District, shall constitute the Third District.

Those parishes which now compose the Fourth Swamp Land District, shall constitute the Fourth District.

The Board of Public Works was to function primarily as a fact-finding agency. Section five enumerated their duties, among which were:

To collect and preserve in their office all such information as may be necessary for the formation and adoption of a general system of internal improvement, leveeing, draining and reclaiming swamp and overflow land from inundation, which is now possessed by the State, together with their present value and their probable value after leveeing, draining and reclaiming are completed; also the effect any work may have upon the land used by individuals, and report them to the General Assembly. . . .

This act does, however order the Board of Public Works to "complete all work already contracted for by the Swamp Land Commissioners," but before undertaking any new construction work, they "shall first submit their plans and estimates to the General Assembly for approval."

Each commissioner was to be paid, out of the swamp land fund, a salary of \$2,000 a year; their board was permitted to employ a chief engineer with four assistants and "such subofficers as they may deem proper", and, apparently more important they were to employ a secretary, whose qualifications were very specifically set out:

He must be a good mathematician, draughtsman and surveyor, and it shall be his duty to keep a journal of all proceedings of the Board, which shall at all times be subject to inspection by the public; he must also make himself generally useful to the Board of Public Works as a draughtsman, mathematician or surveyor, as the service may require.

The Board of Public Works was divided into two departments, viz., The Internal Improvement Department and The Leveeing, Draining and Reclaiming Department, to be located in offices at the State Capitol.

In the Acts of the Legislature for the year 1860 are found ten joint resolutions concerning the Board of Public Works, most of them being in the nature of assignments. Joint Resolution No. 24 provided: "That the Board of Public Works be required to report to the Legislature at as early a date as practicable, as to the importance and mode of preserving the navigation of Red River, by preventing too large a volume of water passing down Jones Bayou, and also the cost of same." Joint Resolution No. 29 instructed the Board of Public Works to report to the Legislature, "as early as practicable, as to the utility and practicability, and the cost of constructing a levee or dam across Old River, through which Red River communicates with the Atchafalaya River, and to report upon the effects of the work upon the Mississippi River."

In another joint resolution of 1860 the Legislature required the Board to ascertain the cost of "partially closing the mouth of the Atchafalaya River on the Old River, so as to reduce the present width of the Atchafalaya to the width of sixty feet, or so much as is necessary not to obstruct navigation, and to report the effects that such dam will have upon the Mississippi."

Joint Resolution No. 69 of 1860 discloses more clearly that the Board of Public Works had, for a few years, direct supervision over developments that depended upon revenues from the sale of swamp lands:

That the Board of Public Works be and they are hereby directed to cause to be made a thorough examination of the swamp lands lying between Harrisonburg and Trinity, on the Ouachita River, and the lands lying north of Little River and below Catahoula Lake, for the purpose of ascertaining the practicability of draining and reclaiming said lands, and the amount of acres that may be reclaimed by building a levee on the low lands between Trinity and the Pine hills near Harrisonburg; and the said Board of Public Works report thereon fully at the next session of the State Legislature.

This excerpt from Joint Resolution No. 154 of 1860 is quoted, not because it discloses important features of the general program, but more particularly to show that every opportunity, however insignificant, was embraced to advance the cause of drainage and flood control. In this resolution the Board of Public Works was authorized and directed to lend one of the State boats, "machinery, tackle, etc., to Joshua Baker and Charley Palfrey, to be by them used at their own expense in cleaning out obstructions to the navigation of Bayou Pigeon and Grand River, for and during the space of not exceeding two months."

Act 71 of 1861 would be startling to those who, at the present time delve into musty old records, should they not stop to reflect upon the economic conditions of Louisiana during the Civil War. But to read that repealing statute in connection with Act 201 of the same year, the reasons for retrenchment in public expenditures is quite obvious.

Act 71 of 1861 is short but cruel:

*Be It Enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, in General Assembly Convened,* That an act entitled an act to organize a Board of Public Works, approved March 17, 1859, being Act 279, be and the same is hereby repealed.

Turning to Act 201 of the same year we find that there is a sufficient balance in the Swamp Land Fund to permit an appropriation of \$8,534 with which to pay the salaries of three members of the Board of Public Works who have "passed to their reward," also to cover the amounts due other employees.

It is interesting to note that during the Civil War the Legislature of Louisiana referred to the United States as "the *late* United States." This phraseology does not appear derisive or vindictive, but more in the nature of lamentation, as if the legislators meant to say, "The Old Nation is dead; we were a part of it."

In abolishing the Board of Public Works, the Legislature, in Act 71 of 1861, made no reference to Article 134 of the Constitution of 1852, which provided that the Board could only be terminated by "a vote of three-fifths of the members elected to each house."

The Constitution of 1864, under the title, "Internal Improvements," had nothing to say about a board of public works, consequently one must conclude that the organization created in 1859 must have been properly abolished in 1861. Despite this failure of the Constitution of 1864 to continue in force and effect the provisions of the earlier organic law of the State, the Legislature of 1868 under Act 72, again established a Board of Public Works, "to consist of five commissioners, one from each internal improvement district." The duration of service of each member was to be determined by "drawing lots," with one of them going out of office each year.

Section 4 of this Act provided:

That it shall be the duty of the board to cause all proper surveys to be made for levees and other public works, and of those to be built and repaired; *to protect as far as possible the swamp lands from overflow*, and to do all other public works as may be designated by the General Assembly, the whole work to be done under such regulations as the Board may, from time to time, adopt.

The existence of the Board of Public Works was terminated by Act 7 of 1871, which created a Board of State Engineers. However, it is interesting to note that by Act 2 of 1942, the Legislature established a Department of Public Works and to this State agency was transferred the functions of the State Board of Engineers. It is doubtful if the author of the recent bill, or those who sponsored it, were familiar with the early history of the Board of Public Works and what it attempted to accomplish more than a century ago.

## OTHER STATE AGENCIES

The Board of Internal Improvements, the Swamp Land Commission, and the Board of Public Works were not the only State agencies which, at various times, had supervision over and disposition of swamp lands in Louisiana. The Commissioner of Public Lands, the Register of the State Land Office, the Board of Levee Commissioners, and the State Board of Engineers were, by various acts of the Legislature, authorized to participate in the use of funds derived from the sale of this donated property. In addition to these, the Surveyor General of the State had been assigned certain supervisory duties that he should have been thoroughly capable of performing, considering the qualifications required by Act 328 of 1855 which created the office: "Besides the scientific knowledge requisite for the profession, the Surveyor General shall possess a thorough knowledge of English, French, and Spanish languages." These required qualifications would be astounding to applicants of 1944, particularly after learning that this erudite official was paid a salary of six hundred dollars a year, out of which he was given the privilege of appointing "one or more deputies at his own expense and responsibility." This act which provided for the appointment of a surveyor for each parish also specified that "the one appointed for the Parish of Orleans shall be ex-officio Surveyor General of the State."

At this late date it is difficult to deduct from legislative acts or to ascertain from other records the efficiency with which these various boards and commissions accomplished the purposes of their creation. However, it does appear that the General Assembly was never content with the agencies they set up.

Joint Resolution No. 105 of 1858 showed discontent with existing agencies: "The State Engineer and the commissioners of the several swamp land districts be and they are hereby appointed commissioners to inquire into the propriety of dispensing with the Internal Improvement Department . . . and the expediency of uniting the Internal Improvement and Swamp Land Boards in one system."

By Act 267 of 1861 the office of Surveyor General of the State was abolished and in its stead a "General Land Office which shall be called the Commissioner of Public Lands" was established. This newly created agency not only supplanted the Surveyor General of the State but also discontinued the Land Office at Baton Rouge and the Land Office at Winnsboro.

The State land office underwent a series of "reorganizations." Act 38 of the Extra Session of 1870 reorganized that agency, dispensed with the Commissioner of Public Lands and provided for the appointment of a Register of the State Land Office, authorized to administer the "sale of lands donated to the State by Congress." Again in 1871, through Act 104, the Legislature "reorganized" the land office and gave more authority to the Register and made him the official to dispose of public lands and ordered him to have surveys made of all approved swamp lands.

But it should be remembered that a "Register" had been, in connection with the State Treasurer, the first official to handle Government-donated lands and to administer the funds derived from their sale; this office was in existence more than a quarter of a century before the session of 1870, as shown by Act 91 of 1844:

That there shall be created by this Act an office for the sale of the unlocated Public Lands of the State of Louisiana, donated to the State by Congress for internal improvements, which shall be administered by a Register and by the Treasurer of the State as receiver of Public Monies for which the lands are sold.

Section 2. That the Register of the Land Office created by this act, shall be appointed by the Governor of the State, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and shall hold his office for the term of two years.

The principal duty assigned the Register under this act of 1844 was to assist the Treasurer in selling public lands at a price of not less than \$3.00 per acre.

Referring again to Act 38 of 1870 which abolished the office of Commissioner of Public Lands and provided for the appointment of a Register of the State Land Office, we call attention to Act 26 of 1877 which reduced the Register's salary and denied him the use of clerical assistance. This law was operative until the enactment of Act 75 of 1880 which in turn was amended by Act 43 of 1892. Under this act of 1892 the Register was authorized to make selections in behalf of the State of all swamp lands not previously selected. This was followed by Act 193 of 1904 which provided that the Register of the State Land Office should be chosen by vote of the people at the general State elections, referred to under a foregoing sub-topic of this study.

The forthright reports of the Register of the State Land Office are not only interesting but they bring to light objectionable features in the handling of swamp lands that do not appear in any other records. The report of 1884 contains this paragraph:

This office is sadly in need of maps, records or charts, showing location and discrimination between the different grades of swamp lands. There are large quantities of lands which have never been surveyed and which belong to the State by virtue of the grants contained in the acts of 1849 and 1850, and the title to which lands cannot be finally vested until said surveys are made.

The following excerpt from the report of 1886 discloses that unscrupulous homesteaders, in their pretended attempts to acquire farm homes, were defrauding the State:

In many cases the entry is only made to protect the party during such time as he is divesting the land of its timber, with no intention of making the proof required of settlement and cultivation.

This report of 1886 also reveals the Register's observations regarding the disposition of swamp lands:

The register has been informed that the State will soon be recovering from the general government a considerable amount of certificate or scrip issued in lieu of swamp indemnity and overflow land, which was disposed of by the general government. These certificates or scrip for swamp indemnity lands are much more valuable than the swamp lands of the State, as the same can be located on any of the United States lands in this State which are subject to sale at \$1.25 per acre.

The origin of the Board of Levee Commissioners antedates that of the Register of the State Land Office, assuming that Act 24 of the First Session of the Legislature of 1841 marks its beginning. This law authorized the police jury of Concordia Parish to divide the parish into three levee wards and to appoint for each ward a "Commissioner of Roads and Levees." Following these appointments the commissioners were to "form a board and they shall have the entire and exclusive control and management in laying out, constructing and repairing all roads and levees. . . ."

A similar law was passed in 1848 (Act 233) which authorized the police jury of Tensas Parish to divide the parish into five levee wards and "to appoint, annually, two commissioners from

each ward." And at this session of the Legislature an act was passed, amended by Act 70 of 1853, which formed a levee district to be composed of the parishes of Carroll, Madison and Catahoula. The purpose of the amendment was to make the members composing the commission elective and not to be appointed by the Governor. Section 9 was amended to read: "There shall be elected in each of said parishes by the qualified voters of said Levee District, three commissioners, and said commissioners shall be styled and constitute a 'Board of Levee Commissioners'." This law gave the commissioners the right to use the "annual tax," but Act 220 of the same session of the Legislature curtailed the expenditure of those tax funds: "They (commissioners) are hereby authorized and empowered to cause so much only of the taxes to be collected as they may deem necessary and expedient to carry into effect the provisions and intentments of said law."

Commissioners for the Levee District of Madison and Carroll parishes were given more authority by Act 13 of 1859, which also gave them corporate powers under the style of *The Board of Levee Commissioners*; the law prescribed a method by which they could issue bonds, sell them, and the manner in which they could use the funds; also described the form of bonds, fixed the dates of maturity, the rate of interest, and prescribed the method of assessing property and collecting taxes to support the bond issue.

In 1866 the Governor appointed twenty-one men, provisionally, to constitute a Board of Levee Commissioners, and by Act 20 of that year his appointments were approved and ratified, and these gentlemen were "authorized and empowered to continue their functions until superseded by such Levee Commissioners as may be established by law, or until otherwise ordered by the Legislature, provided the term of office of said commissioners shall expire at the end of the next regular session of the Legislature."

Section 3 of this act provided, "That the said Board of Levee Commissioners shall have the full power to let out the contracts for the building and repairing of all levees in the State." They were also given the authority to "prescribe and regulate the dimensions and specifications of the levees to be built." They were to be paid \$6.00 per day, each, while "actually in attendance at the session of the Board," and given fifteen cents a mile for

traveling expenses. This act also appropriated \$20,000 out of the Swamp Land Fund to pay the salaries of the commissioners and "all officers appointed by them."

Act 5 of the Extra Session of 1878 divided the State into five levee districts and authorized the Governor to appoint a Board of Levee Commissioners for each district, composed of a member from each parish. They were to hold office for two years and serve without compensation. Although a portion of this act was repealed by Act 33 of 1879, the section pertaining to the Board of Levee Commissioners has not changed.

This Act number 5 of the Extra Session of 1878 appears to have made inoperative the various laws which authorized the police juries to appoint boards of levee commissioners. It gave the Governor authority to "appoint a board of levee commissioners for each of these districts." (Five districts were formed and their boundaries fixed by section 7 of this act.)

The substance of these last-mentioned acts became the organic law of the State after the adoption of the Constitution of 1879:

Article 213: A levee system shall be maintained in the State, and a tax not to exceed one mill may be levied annually on all property subject to taxation, and shall be applied exclusively to the maintenance and repair of levees.

Article 214: The General Assembly may divide the State into levee districts and provide for the appointment or election of levee commissioners in said district who shall, in the method and manner provided by law, have supervision of the erection, repair and maintenance of the levees in said districts; to that effect it may levy a tax not to exceed five mills on the taxable property situated within the alluvial portions of said districts subject to overflow.

Five years later (Joint Resolution No. 112 of 1884) the legislature sought to have Article 214 amended. They wanted to delegate power to increase the rate of taxation to as high as ten mills, "in case of necessity," provided that a majority of the voters of the district concerned approved of such increase.

Act 44 of 1886, which amended Act 33 of 1879, indicates that the proposal to amend Article 214 of the Constitution had not been submitted to the voters up to that date, for one of the purposes of the act of 1886 was to give the Board of Levee Commissioners of the Fifth Levee District the power "to levy a five mill district tax, pursuant to Article 214 of the Constitution."

But Article 214 of the Constitution was amended at the general election held on April 17, 1888, which was followed by the passing of Act 8 of that year, approved June 15, the purpose of which was to prescribe the manner of submitting district levee taxes to a vote of the property taxpayers, "as required by said Amended Article 214 of the Constitution." (See Article 239 of the Constitution of 1898.)

In most of the laws cited in the preceding paragraphs the State Board of Engineers has also been involved, for the growth and expansion of these two state agencies have been somewhat synonymous and coextensive.

Although the various boards and commissions had employed engineers and inspectors, and there had been a state engineer since 1820, it was not until 1871 that the legislature realized the necessity of giving men of this profession opportunity to exercise some control over the program of levee construction. Section 1 of Act 7 of 1871 provides:

That there is hereby created a Board of State Engineers, to be composed of three members, each of whom shall be a civil engineer, skilled in the theory and practice of his profession. They shall be known as "State Engineers," one of whom shall be Chief State Engineer, and the others Assistant State Engineers. They shall be appointed by the Governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, and shall hold their office during good behavior, subject at all times to be removed by the Governor.

(It was this Act 7 of 1871 that repealed Act 72 of 1868 which had recreated the Board of Public Works.)

Sections 6 and 7 of the act of 1871 directed the Board of State Engineers to make surveys, prepare plans, to let contracts, also to make written reports to the Governor on any matters of internal improvements "that he may require."

Section 9 required the Board of State Engineers to make reports to the Legislature on "the exact state of funds for internal improvements, the progress and condition of the work, the surveys, plans and estimated expenses of such new work as may or should be recommended. . . ."

But Act 7 of 1871 was repealed at the Extra Session of 1877 by the passing of Act 140, Section 1 reading: "That an Act entitled 'An Act to create a Board of State Engineers,' approved

February 24, 1871, be and the same is hereby repealed." However, section 7 of the act discloses that the Board of State Engineers was not abolished: "That the Board of State Engineers created under the provisions of this act shall take charge of and preserve the records and archives of the present State Engineer department. . . ."

Under the provisions of this law the engineers were simply divested of most of their authority to "supervise management and control of all public levees." Control of levee work was transferred to the police juries of the various parishes, they being "invested with the power to make such regulations as are necessary and proper for the repairs and construction of levees in the limits of their respective parishes. . . ."

By implication the authors of this law admitted that the police juries were not the perfect agencies to handle all matters pertaining to levees, for the act required the State Board of Engineers "to report to the Governor the extent of repairs necessary and of levees to be constructed which are . . . beyond the means of the parochial authorities. . . ."

Act 140 of 1877 made no important changes with reference to the Board of State Engineers, and since it was repealed in part by Act 5 of the Extra Session of 1878, it will suffice to present some of the provisions of the repealing law. It divided the State into five levee districts and provided for the appointment of a Board of Levee Commissioners and prescribed their powers and duties; it levied a tax on property and produce, and again gave control of levees to the police juries. The Governor was authorized to appoint the levee commissioners, to be composed of a member from each parish wholly or jointly within the district.

By implication section 10 reduced the powers of the engineers: "That the police juries of the several parishes of the State are hereby invested with the management and control of all public levees of the State . . . and they are hereby authorized and required to make such regulations as are necessary and proper for their repair, preservation and protection. . . ."

Act 5 of 1878 was repealed by Act 33 of 1879, but it and each succeeding law established more firmly the Board of State Engineers, whose activities concerning drainage and levee construction have made it the most important agency in the State in using funds derived from swamp lands donated by the National

Government. In spite of the multiplicity of laws, irrespective of repealing acts and amendments, Act 33 of 1879 appears to be the basic law on which the Board of State Engineers operated until Act 2 of 1942 transferred the functions of that board to the Department of Public Works. This act of 1879 divided the State into six levee districts and defined the boundaries of each; it renewed the authority of the Governor to appoint a Board of Levee Commissioners for each district, "to be composed of one member from each parish," and more important, it authorized the Governor to appoint the Board of State Engineers, composed of three members, "one of whom shall be known as Chief Engineer, and two assistant Engineers, whose term of office shall be four years from the date of their appointment." It defined the duties of the board and prescribed their powers and settled for a long period of years the question of what agency was responsible for drainage and flood control.

#### LOUISIANA LEVEE COMPANY

Although the Louisiana Levee Company did not restrict its plundering to such meager sources as the Swamp Land Fund, the fact that it, for a period of years, was granted the exclusive right to build levees along the Mississippi River and all its tributaries, makes it necessary to refer to its unwarranted existence.

Charles T. Howard and John A. Morris were two of the most unscrupulous carpetbaggers to swoop down upon the State during the years of pillage which historians refer to as "The Tragic Era" or "The Period of Reconstruction." They spurned such petty thievery as taking over the Swamp Land Fund; they were interested only in robbing the State and all its citizens.

Not content with a daily stipend of \$75,000 which the Louisiana State Lottery Company was netting them, they wanted an additional franchise which would give them exclusive control over such funds as they believed could be extracted from the people under the guise of levee building. The franchise which they obtained from a carpetbag legislature and a carpetbag governor, giving them the exclusive privilege of operating a state-wide lottery for a period of twenty-five years, had been operating for three years when they inveigled the General Assembly into passing Act 4 of 1871, which chartered the organization that would

give Howard and Morris the opportunity—and the legal right—for additional plunder and pillage:

That the Louisiana Levee Company, for and in consideration of the compensation, benefits, rights and powers hereinafter stated, shall take charge of, manage, control, construct, maintain, repair and keep in repair all the levees in the State on the Mississippi River, its tributaries and outlets, and such levees in the State of Arkansas as may be necessary to protect any of the lands from overflow by the waters of the Mississippi or Arkansas rivers. . . . That said company is hereby vested with the sole and exclusive custody, management and control of all the levees of this State for the period of twenty-one years from the day when this act shall take effect.

There is nothing particularly alarming about that part of the statute just quoted. One might glean from it that Howard and Morris were moved to tears over the poor plight of people who lived in constant fear of inundation. But other sections of Act 4 of 1871 reveal the true spirit which motivated all of the activities of these scavengers while they sojourned in Louisiana. This law authorized the State Auditor to assess and collect "annually, for the period of twenty-one years . . . two-tenths of one per centum upon the assessed value of the taxable property within the State . . . and that said fund shall be paid over to the treasurer of the company, upon the order of the president thereof, by the Treasurer of the State, as compensation to said company for maintaining levees."

Howard and Morris, not being willing to risk their own money in so hazardous an undertaking as levee maintenance, and the Louisiana Levee Company not having any funds of its own, the State was called upon to finance all operations from the moment of its creation. Therefore, Act 4 of 1871 provided that the State issue bonds to the amount of one million dollars, "*said bonds to be delivered to the president of the company.*" And that section of the act which prescribes the rate of interest, maturity of the bonds, etc., also declares: "They shall be dated on the first day of April, 1871, and shall be made payable to the President of the Louisiana Levee Company." To make these bonds easily negotiable, the law specifies: "For the payment of the principal and interest of the bonds aforesaid, the faith of the State of Louisiana is unconditionally pledged to the holder."

This act was so harsh in fortifying the company against injunction that it practically precluded any property holder from resorting to the courts in an effort to enjoin the collection of taxes imposed.

Before citing the laws that follow chronologically in the presentation of this stupendous fraud, reference is made here to the fact that Howard and Morris, being fearful that the ancient doctrine of "honor among thieves" might not be applicable in their case, found it expedient to intercept the funds collected as taxes in the various parishes before, in the course of prescribed routine, they reached the State Treasurer.

This bold taking of tax funds before they reached his office evidently irked the State Treasurer. Anyway, he was instrumental in having a law passed which must have had considerable deterring effect upon the parish tax collectors. Act 3 of 1874 provided, "That any tax collector who shall turn over any money or warrants by him collected, to any person except the State Treasurer, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor. . . ." This act also created a Board of Liquidation, with certain guardian duties.

Act 27 of 1871 amplified the powers and privileges given to the Louisiana Levee Company; also ratified and confirmed a contract made between the company and the Governor (Henry C. Warmoth), and sanctioned again the agreement to pay the said company 60 cents per yard for all dirt they might move in the construction and repairing of levees. Act 43 of 1873 placed more firmly the bands of steel about the necks of alluvial people of the State and closed all possible loopholes that might endanger the exclusive rights of the carpetbaggers. Act 56 of 1874 merely sets out a method by which the Louisiana Levee Company might relieve itself of liability for damages in certain cases.

Act 24 of 1875 was passed during another administration, that of William P. Kellogg, and it seems to sound a note of warning. It directed the committee on Lands and Levees to "within ten days from the passage thereof, ascertain the entire amount due the Louisiana Levee Company from the State of Louisiana for work done up to the first day of October, 1873."

Act 139 of 1877, passed during Nicholls' administration, intoned the death knell of the Louisiana Levee Company; it reached into the legislative grabbag and pulled out all the laws that con-

cerned this nefarious organization and, as nearly as possible, destroyed them. However, Section 4 of this act authorized the company "to bring suit against the State of Louisiana for any cause of action it may have against the State growing out of the construction, maintenance, or repair of any levees constructed, maintained or repaired by said company. This act also made provision for the payment of taxes to a "redemption-of-the-debt fund."

Of this period of levee maintenance, Chief State Engineer Henry B. Richardson said:

The condition of the levee system was hardly better than it had been twenty years before. . . . The Great crevasses at Ashton, Diamond Island Bend, Morganza, and Bonnet Carré had remained open for years, and many miles of levees existed . . . that had been built with grades known and designed to be three and four feet lower than the level of the previous high water.

Availing itself of the privileges granted by Act 139 of 1877 the Louisiana Levee Company did bring suit against the State of Louisiana, which case was reported in the 31st *La. Ann.*, page 250. The amounts claimed totalled the sum of \$1,704,533.16 and the Supreme Court rendered judgment in favor of plaintiff in the amount asked for, but restricted their claim "to the fund created by the levee taxes heretofore assessed under the provisions of the various laws creating and amending the powers of the Levee Company."

#### NATIONAL AID NOT YET AVAILABLE

Funds derived from the sale of swamp lands in Louisiana constituted a mere pittance of the amount required to construct and keep in repair an adequate levee system. Even as late as 1876 the people of the State were still hopeful that the National Government would come to their aid, which feeling of confidence is reflected in Joint Resolution No. 2 of the Legislature of that year:

That the Senators and Representatives in Congress from Louisiana be and are hereby requested to urge upon the Congress of the United States the passage of a bill making an appropriation for the rebuilding of all levees on the Mississippi in Louisiana which are in need of reconstruction, and which our State, for the want of means, is utterly unable

to rebuild, and also to obtain, if possible, the passage of a law providing for the assumption by the General Government of the entire and exclusive control of a levee system of the Mississippi River and its tributaries in lower Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana.

At a meeting of the police jury of Concordia Parish on April 11, 1882, a resolution was adopted, in the preamble of which is described at great length the devastating flood of 1882, recounting the enormous amount of property destroyed and the mileage of levees swept away. It set out the inability of the parish and the State to effectively cope with the waters of the mighty river. It resolved that representatives in Congress be urged to support the bill that was pending, which, if passed, would appropriate \$6,500,000 for the protection of people and property along the lower Mississippi.

The alluvial parishes and the State as a whole kept on struggling against the onslaughts of the waters that poured down upon them from other states, and the National Government kept on splitting hairs, but the people never seemed to lose faith.

At a meeting of the police jury of Concordia Parish, held on June 20, 1927, members of another and more hopeful generation prepared an appeal in the form of a resolution, declaring "that control of the flood waters of the Mississippi and all of its tributaries is a *National problem*, and that the sole responsibility therefor should be assumed by the National Government."

It is a tribute to American people that they can accept calamities without hurling acrimonious charges at those who might have prevented them, and it is a tribute to Southern authors that they can write facetiously of such destruction as the Mississippi River has wrought. No better proof of these statements can be offered than Harris Dickson's book, *The Story of King Cotton*, from which the following is quoted:

Valley dwellers had complained and complained of Father Mississippi's propensity to carry off their crops, but Uncle Sam insisted it was none of his business how badly the river cut up, provided it didn't leave a lot of sandbars lying around loose to interfere with navigation. Uncle had always contended that his job under the constitution is to keep open a gangway for steamboats, so that citizens may travel and U. S. mails go through. Therefore every time the river left a snag sticking up, or dumped a chunk of mud about the size

of Connecticut, Uncle trailed along behind to fix that part of it. But on pay day when Uncle dug into his jeans and appropriated a dollar, he never failed to remind us: "Listen, boys, this money is for improvement of navigation. I won't spend a nickel for protection of land."

Being uncommonly pig-headed he stuck to his original proposition and claimed jurisdiction only of the channel. Beyond the usual track of navigation, valley dwellers must shift for themselves; and though Uncle felt sorry, nevertheless if the river took a notion to slosh over its banks and devour miles of plantations or eliminate a few towns from the map, incidentally drowning a flock of hayseeds who couldn't swim, why, that was their lookout.

As years rolled on more and more people came to live in our valley, floods grew worse and worse until Uncle changed his mind a little and began to help us build levees. He excused himself by saying that embankments contracted the stream and made it scour a deeper channel for steamboats to carry mail, all the time winking his left eye if a levee happened to hold off water from a few acres of cotton. . . .

The record doesn't make clear the reason why the legislature, by Act 106 of 1888, repealed the law which authorized the Governor to employ counsel "to assert the rights of the State to lands donated to the State by the Federal Government." The Act of 1888 even went so far as to repudiate the only contract of employment the Governor made. Their repealing act abrogated and terminated the "agreement made between Louis A. Wiltz, Governor of the State, and John McEnery, made March 20, 1880, purporting to be under the authority of said Act No. 23."

#### SWAMP LANDS DONATED TO THE VARIOUS LEVEE DISTRICTS

Act 44 of 1886 was the original act which inaugurated a new method of disposing of swamp lands. This law was followed by the enactment of other laws to authorize the transfer of such property to the various levee districts.

In his "History of Concordia Parish," published in the *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 15, page 628, Robert Dabney Calhoun wrote:

Though the parish had spent much money in levee construction, the large-scale and systematic building of levees may be said to have commenced with the creation of the Fifth Louisiana Levee District, by act of the General Assembly, approved July 2, 1886; and the grant by the State

to the Board of Levee Commissioners of all undisposed of Swamp Lands in the District, and all lands in the District that had been forfeited or adjudicated to the State for non-payment of taxes; and with power to the Board (Commissioners) to issue bonds against its revenues, and to levy ad valorem taxes, acreage taxes and "forced contributions" on cotton produced.

The "forced contributions on cotton produced," which Calhoun mentioned in the paragraph quoted were to be resorted to only in "case the board shall deem the funds herein provided for inadequate to construct and repair levees . . . the said board shall have authority to levy a special assessment or forced contribution, not to exceed fifty cents per bale on each and every bale of cotton produced in the district upon lands subject to taxation under the provisions of this act."

Section 11 of the act inaugurated the new method of disposing of swamp lands:

That in order to provide additional means to carry out the purposes of this act, and to furnish resources to enable said board to establish and complete a thorough system of levees and to protect the lands of the Fifth Louisiana Levee District from disastrous floods, all lands belonging to the State of Louisiana, embraced in the original grants by Congress to the State for levee and drainage purposes that are located in the Fifth Louisiana Levee District . . . be and the same are hereby granted to said board of commissioners; also all lands forfeited or sold to the State for non-payment of taxes, situated in said district and liable to overflows be, and the same are hereby granted to said board of commissioners, where the period of redemption has expired, and as soon as the period for redemption shall hereafter have expired.

This Act 44 further provided that all such lands were to be "exempted from taxation during the period they shall remain unsold by said board. That said board shall have authority to mortgage, pledge and sell such lands, and otherwise dispose of them, in such manner as they may provide, in order to raise funds to locate, construct and repair the levees and reclaim said lands from overflow, said lands being now considered almost valueless in consequence of their exposure to annual overflows."

Subsequent acts of the legislature provided for similar grants of swamp lands to the levee districts in which such lands were located, but it was not until 1908, through Act 215, that the

Legislature provided a specific or restricted method by which such lands could be disposed of by the levee boards. Section 1 of this act declared null and void all applications for entry or purchase of public lands then on file in the office of the Register of the State Land Office. But this section of the act was amended by Act 283 of 1914 by reinstating as of the date of their filing, all applications for entry or purchase of public lands, and providing: "It shall be the duty of the Governor and the Register of the State Land Office to issue patents thereon in accordance with the laws in force at the time any and all such applications were filed."

Section 5 of the Act of 1908 was also amended in part, but both the original and the amended laws provided for the sale of public lands by the sheriff to the highest bidder after due advertisement of the sale, but fixed a minimum price at which various classes of land could be sold. After sale of such property the purchaser "shall be entitled to a patent signed by the Register, or the President of the Levee Board, as the case may be, and by the Governor of the State."

These transfers by the State to the various levee districts are referred to in the Register's report of 1898, in which he calls attention to "the great falling off in the sales of our lands, as compared with the several preceding years. This is attributable to the fact of the donation by the State of all of her lands lying and situated within the limits of the several levee districts, thus removing them from the State Land Office. Under these several donations there have been transferred by me 894,508 acres."

Act 177 of 1902 made changes in the Register's method of operation and no doubt presented more difficult problems. This Act provided that all swamp indemnity scrip or certificates held and used by the State should be sold at public auction by the Register of the State Land Office, after prescribed advertising, to the highest bidders; also provided a similar method of selling all lands that were subject to entry and sale.

His report of 1898 states that "a balance of 2,501,823.65 acres now constitute the public domain of the State proper, as derived from the general government under the several congressional grants."

A later report discloses that during the years 1904 to 1906 there were 86,677.28 acres diverted to the various levee boards,

not including 180,000 acres "approved of to the State, all of which were in Terrebonne Parish, and which were transferred to the board of levee commissioners of that district."

In the opinion of Honorable Fred J. Grace, Register of the State Land Office, as expressed in 1912, Act 215 of 1908 was "a vast improvement over former laws on the same subject. . . . Had this law been enacted twelve years prior to 1908," he said in his biennial report of 1912, "the amount of money that would have been saved for the State and particularly to the Levee Boards would have been a vast sum almost impossible to estimate."

In this report he contrasts the results from Act 215 with those obtained through previous laws:

Under former laws, when the lands of the State were sold the first applicant who came or wrote to the Land Office and tendered \$1.50 per acre for Swamp Lands . . . had thereby accepted the offer of the State to sell and was entitled and had the prior right to get a patent for the lands applied for, regardless of the quantity, location, amount of timber or its value, and other facts material in fixing the price of lands. There was no notice to other prospective purchasers, no chance for competition in bidding and the State was bound to an arbitrary price regardless of how much the land was actually worth.

And, of course, under the older laws the Levee Boards, too, had been powerless to obtain prices for lands commensurate with their true value. And reporting on the great quantity of such lands that were owned by the Districts, the Register said in this biennial brochure: "The Boards could formerly sell at any time any or all of their lands, regardless of value, no minimum price being fixed nor other regulations being had for the transaction."

However, this report of the Register in 1912 condemns that section of the Act of 1908 which "declares that all applications for the entry or purchase of any of the public lands of the State on file in the State Land Office at the date of its passage and to or on which patents or certificates of entry had not already issued, shall be and are declared null and void."

At this session of the Legislature—1912—the General Assembly passed the following resolution:

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of Louisiana, the Senate concurring, that our Senators and Representatives in Congress are hereby requested to use their

exertion to procure a speedy settlement of the swamp land grants of March 2, 1849 and September 29, 1850, in the mode and manner that they may deem most proper. . . .

The Register of the State Land Office reported in 1916 that since his report of two years previous 34,320.33 acres of Swamp Lands had been approved to the State, including, however, 7,143.39 acres that comprised the Sabine Islands, which property was being claimed by the State of Texas.

In this report of 1916 the Register calls attention to a situation that had embarrassed him considerably:

On some occasions the State of Louisiana has sold land, the title to which it could not deliver. . . . Up to the present time the United States Government has approved to the State something over nine million acres of land under the Congressional Swamp Land Grants, but many more thousands of acres have been selected by the State as swamp land, but have never been approved to the State. In most instances these lands have, years ago, been sold by the State.

The procedure established in Washington did not make the task of the Register any easier in his efforts to terminate these conflicts, and he mentions in his report:

Under circular of the General Land Department at Washington (5 L. D., 279) lands in such condition as described above are subject to entry at the Local United States Land Office upon the filing of a non-swamp affidavit as to the character of the land. During the last few years so many entries of such nature have been allowed by the local United States Land Office, the State being notified of such action and given thirty days within which to file objections to the allowance of such entries and to ask for a hearing in order to establish the character of the land. It then falls to the State to prove the swampy character of the lands involved, which is by no means an easy task since the grants of 1849 and 1850 have been construed by the Supreme Court of the United States to be in *praesenti*, thus throwing the burden upon the State to establish the character of the lands as near that time as possible. This is a tedious, expensive and very difficult task on account of the lack of witnesses who are able to remember the condition of the land in 1849 and 1850, which in most cases, on account of artificial drainage, etc., has changed in character.

The Register gives some idea of the enormity of his duties by calling attention to certain requests from Washington:

The Commissioner of the General Land Office has requested the State to furnish his department with certificates

of complete claim for every township in this State in accordance with Rule 6 of Circular of September 19, 1891 (13 L. D., 301), so that the swamp land grants can be properly adjusted. . . .

The Commissioner of the General Land Office has called on the State of Louisiana for a report showing what this State has done with the swamp lands approved to it, the proceeds from the sale of which were to have been used by this State for the purpose of draining its territory and building levees.

Without quoting from or citing the various laws that pertain to the sale of warrants and certificates that were used in acquiring public lands of the State, it seems appropriate to call attention to the fact that Honorable Fred J. Grace was extremely diligent in his efforts on behalf of the State, and yet he never relaxed in his determined policy to aid persons who honestly sought to obtain public lands either by purchase or entry. In his biennial reports he presented convincing arguments for the amendment or repeal of laws, the results of which, in his opinion, were unfavorable to prospective home builders.

In his Bienial Report of 1918, he said:

I would recommend that the validation period granted by Acts 85 of 1906, 221 of 1912, and 223 of 1914, be extended by the Legislature for a period of one year in order to permit those holding title to lands entered from the State with scrip to validate their lands by paying \$1.50 into the State Treasury. There remain a great many acres of such lands invalidated, the owners of which, through oversight, did not avail themselves of the grace granted by the State of Louisiana.

From the Register's report of 1918 we learn that the increasing number of oil fields in the State are causing officials to anticipate greater profits from Swamp Lands than had been made out of sale to prospective homemakers. On March 20, 1918, an executive order issued from the Governor's office that directed "The Register of the State Land Office and all others in authority," to withdraw from sale or entry "all the vacant and unappropriated lands of the State of Louisiana, including the beds and bottoms of present and former bodies of water." Then by way of explanation the Governor added: "It is my opinion that the lands hereby withdrawn are more valuable for minerals than for any other purpose."

The 1920 report of the Register discloses that between the dates June 13, 1918 and February 20, 1920, there were 6,543,855 acres of land approved to the State of Louisiana as swamp lands, explaining that "the greatest bulk of these approvals is the result of contests between the State and homesteaders under the United States Government, and merely perfects the titles of the claimants under the State."

In a letter addressed to the State Land Office by the Board of State Affairs, dated April 8, 1920, a request was made for the following information:

1. The number of acres of public land granted the State of Louisiana by the Federal Government, giving dates of grants.
2. The number of acres of public lands deeded to the various levee boards . . . by the State of Louisiana through legislative authority, giving dates.

The reply to this letter contains figures that are revealing and important, particularly since it is possible to read volumes of statutes and other reports without arriving at any conclusion regarding the magnitude of grants under the two Swamp Land Acts.

1. Taking the report of the Honorable Commissioner of the General Land Office, Washington, D. C., for the year 1918 and adding amounts shown by approved lists since that report, I find approved to the State under the Swamp grants of 1849 and 1850, nine million seven hundred forty-two thousand three hundred ten acres of land.

The register adds to this figure the half million acres approved to the State under act of Congress of September 4, 1841, also 194,294.67 acres donated to the State under Act of Congress approved on May 20, 1826, and further replying to the question, he wrote:

The total granted to the State of Louisiana under the above approvals, as near as we can find from the data at hand, is ten million four hundred thirty-six thousand and six hundred five and 18/100 (10,436,605.18) acres.

Replying to the second question propounded by the Board of State Affairs, the Register itemized the number of acres donated by the State to twelve Levee Boards, showing a total of 2,301,-293.77 acres.

The reports of the Register of the State Land Office from 1922 to 1934 show the number of acres approved to the State during each biennial period as follows:

<i>Biennial Report of</i>	<i>Number of Acres</i>
1922 .....	1,883.10
1924 .....	8,917.43
1926 .....	5,071.96
1928 .....	17,967.12
1930 .....	5,494.69
1932 .....	7,357.34
1934 .....	2,477.29
Total .....	49,168.93

The biennial reports of the Register of the State Land Office issued since 1934 do not show the number of acres approved to the State; however, the records in that department disclose that from 1934 up to March 24, 1944, there have been 12,140.02 approved.

These figures show a grand total of 9,803,618.95 acres of swamp land approved to the State of Louisiana under the Acts of Congress of 1849 and 1850, commonly known as the "Swamp Land Grants," which grand total does not include the half million acres donated under Act of Congress approved September 4, 1841, nor the 194,294.67 acres granted under the Act of Congress and approved on May 20, 1826.

It will be recalled that the State donated to each of the levee boards all tax-forfeited lands and all swamp lands lying within the limits of the respective districts. Many government-donated tracts that were acquired by individuals through purchase or homestead entry were subsequently lost to the State for non-payment of taxes. It would be a prodigious task to trace titles to all lands owned by any one of the levee districts in order to ascertain the number of acres originally acquired by the State under the Swamp Land Acts.

The Engineering Division of the Department of Public Works is making a study of the lands that have been transferred by the State to the various levee boards, including swamp and tax-forfeited lands, more particularly with the view of ascertaining the number of acres involved. From a report made by H. C.

Daigre, Resident Engineer, to H. H. Hayne, Chief of the State Lands Section, the following excerpts are quoted:

I have concluded the examination of the various transfers of swamp and tax lands by the State of Louisiana to the Tensas Basin Levee Board in the eight parishes; namely, LaSalle, Catahoula, Franklin, Caldwell, Ouachita, Richland, Morehouse, and West Carroll, comprising the Tensas Basin Levee District beginning with the first transfer in 1889 and ending with the date of February 1, 1944.

Before proceeding with the work in the several parishes, I thoroughly examined the State and Government Tract Books in the State Land Office and transcribed therefrom to township plats all land approved by the U. S. Land Office as swamp land and subject to transfer to the Levee Board, and checked this record against the sales and quit claims of lands by the Levee Board in the several parishes. The final analysis shows the Levee Board now owning approximately 4,000 acres, principally in Franklin, LaSalle, and Catahoula Parishes, all of which is swamp land.

Attached, is a tabulation of only such swamp lands that I am confident the Levee Board has a clear title to. There are various other tracts of swamp lands which the Levee Board received title to since 1898, but are held and claimed by other persons under adverse titles, the validity of which can only be determined by legal talent and possibly court decisions.

After eliminating the tax-forfeited lands listed, we present the tabulation referred to in the last paragraph quoted:

STATE LANDS TRANSFERRED TO THE TENSAS BASIN LEVEE BOARD

*Approximate Acreage*

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Swamp Land (1889)</i>	<i>Swamp Land (1905)</i>
Ouachita .....	24,518.90	866.42
Catahoula and LaSalle .....	206,754.16	5,247.81
Richland .....	36,001.80	1,898.46
Caldwell .....	40,483.98	1,866.75
Morehouse .....	73,685.98	983.47
Franklin .....	27,916.28	1,971.48
W. Carroll .....	71,425.00	526.49
Totals .....	480,786.10	12,460.88

Note: There have been a number of transfers of small tracts since the above dates.

From the sale of donated swamp lands the State did not realize sufficient funds to construct adequate levees or to drain areas of any consequence. Congress had referred to these inundated lands as being "unfit for cultivation," and the State did but little to improve their character. But within recent years—since the discovery of oil and gas—some of these lands have become of considerable value to the various levee districts, also productive of revenue to the State.

Exact figures on the quantity of oil and gas produced in each parish are easily obtainable, but the number of acres of donated swamp lands that are producing these products has not been determined, nor do we know what percentage of the total parish area is owned by the levee district embracing it.

The severance tax on marketed resources from Jefferson, Lafourche, Plaquemines, and St. Charles parishes for the year 1943 was:

NATURAL RESOURCES PRODUCTION						
PARISH	QTR.	OIL	GAS	TIMBER	SHELLS	SULPHUR
Jefferson.....	March	\$ 140,044.96	\$ 2,842.87	\$ 7.44	\$ 172.60	
	June ..	157,862.91	4,014.75	11.82		
	Sept. ..	169,024.36	4,162.62	3.18		
	Dec. ...	169,791.41	4,170.83	2.40		
		\$ 636,723.64	\$15,191.07	\$ 24.84	\$ 172.60	
Lafourche.....	March	\$ 205,078.88	\$19,137.02	\$ 63.70	\$ 442.62	
	June ..	215,114.88	16,140.86	152.55	405.11	
	Sept. ..	244,032.51	18,536.41	91.60	125.59	
	Dec. ...	231,647.79	25,552.90	151.91	501.81	
		\$ 895,874.06	\$79,367.19	\$459.76	\$1,475.13	
Plaquemines.....	March	\$ 228,191.63	\$ 590.80			
	June ..	240,804.08	938.95			\$178,123.05
	Sept. ..	271,686.61	1,397.91			195,061.40
	Dec. ...	279,922.47	1,423.44	1.02		132,236.55
		\$1,020,604.79	\$ 4,351.10	1.02		\$505,421.00
St. Charles.....	March	\$ 125,871.89	\$ 847.36	\$ 7.28		
	June ..	137,923.30	1,129.19			
	Sept. ..	148,010.62	729.86	9.27		
	Dec. ...	139,336.07	825.88	3.57		
		\$ 551,141.88	\$ 3,532.29	\$ 20.12		

The figures quoted disclose only the amount of revenue received by the State through severance tax on resources, and do not reveal or even reflect the amount of money the levee districts may have obtained from leases and royalties.

The rate of severance tax varies with the grades of oil, but the average is 9.7 cents per barrel. The severance tax on gas is 3 cents per million cubic feet.

The four parishes selected are contiguous and contain a larger percentage of swamp lands than any other four parishes so grouped; they also contain more productive oil and gas fields than are found in other levee districts that embrace smaller areas of swamp lands. In fact it must not be assumed that all levee districts in the State are recipients of revenue from oil and gas production. The figures are quoted merely to suggest that Louisiana may derive far greater benefits in the future from the lands donated by Congress than it has during the past century.

Moreover, the National Government may join the State of Louisiana in a program of drainage and reclamation which will transform these "unfit-for-cultivation" lands into productive fields. Centuries of partial inundation have added fertility to the soil and there are millions of acres of swamp lands in Louisiana that are as alluring as were the frontiers of the West many generations ago.

It may be charged that in accepting donation of swamp lands from the National Government the State of Louisiana agreed to and assumed the responsibility of draining and reclaiming these areas. Be that as it may, after a century of hair-splitting philosophy Congress at last concluded that it was the Nation's duty to control its flood waters that swept down its own river from other states to destroy the property of Louisiana people. Had such responsibilities been acknowledged by Congress when the Louisiana Territory was purchased and the people of this State relieved of the prodigious task of flood control they could have reclaimed the swamp lands. The cost of drainage would have been infinitesimal as compared to the cost of building, repairing and maintaining levees.

It was not until after the flood of 1927 that the National Congress quit splitting hairs under the doctrine that so long as the water of the Mississippi remains within its banks it's ours but when it breaks over, it's yours. During that overflow the entire Mississippi Valley became submerged and remained inundated for more than three months, and more than two hundred and fifty million dollars worth of property was destroyed. Of that

catastrophe and how it aroused the sympathetic people of the Nation and disturbed the Congress, Harris Dickson wrote in *The Story of King Cotton*:

A manful howl uprose. Everybody hollered. The North chorused, the West chimed in. Brave men and women throughout the world felt a sympathy for other brave men and women who struggled so courageously to defend themselves. Help poured upon us like an avalanche, generous help that warms the heart—not the memory, but the kindness of it. Then we caught our breath, held meetings and sent more delegations to confer with Uncle Sam.

The disaster made a different dent in his head. American lives were lost and homes were wrecked on American soil, so Uncle Samuel broadened his interpretation of the post-road clause. At first, like a bathing beauty, he had only dallied flirtatiously around the river's edge. Now he dived in, body and breeches, and started a war to end wars. Congress also got riled and passed a law with teeth in it, 325,000,000 teeth. . . .

After abandoning his former attitude that he wouldn't spend a counterfeit nickel for protection of property, he now instructs his agents by special act of Congress that "all diversion works and outlets shall be built in a manner and of a character that will fully and amply protect adjacent lands."

Had Congress admitted soon after the Louisiana Purchase that it was the duty of the National Government to share in the responsibility of protection against inundation, a safe and secure system of levees could have been provided. In addition to the vast amount of property that would have been saved from destruction the Nation and the State would have spent less money. The overflow of 1882 was not more severe than many others, and yet, during that devastating period Congress spent \$218,000 to buy rations for the suffering people, which sum was a mere fraction of what was used by the Nation, the State, the Red Cross and other agencies during the flood of 1927. Between the years 1865 and 1903 the State of Louisiana spent \$23,345,000 in the building and repairing of levees.

#### THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION

Although the Mississippi River drains the richest territory in the world, representing over forty per cent of the total area of the United States, the Federal Government was totally indifferent toward its protection from flood until 1879. On June 28

of that year Congress passed an act which provided for the appointment of a Mississippi River Commission and defined its duties in part as follows:

To take into consideration and mature such plan or plans and estimates as will correct, permanently locate, and deepen the channel and protect the banks of the Mississippi River; improve and give safety and ease to the navigation thereof; promote and facilitate commerce, trade and the postal service.

Although the passage of this law was the first step toward direct government aid to flood control, the language of the act forbade the commission to consider the protection of lands from overflow. Even so, a majority of the members appointed to form the commission believed that the levee system could be used effectively to improve navigation.

The commission in its first report, dated February 17, 1880, contemplated the permanent fixing and improvement of the channel of the river to a depth of at least ten feet at extreme low water. Upon this report congress made its first appropriation.

Ten years later (September 19, 1890) congress amended the original act to the extent that it authorized the commission to include levee construction and repairing in the list of their duties. In the language of Harris Dickson this was the first time Uncle Sam began dallying "flirtatiously around the river's edge."

But the flood of 1927 softened the Old Gentleman's heart. When the waters began spreading through Louisiana, Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Missouri, and Illinois, covering an estimated area of 4,417,500 acres, of which 1,112,200 acres were in Louisiana, "Uncle Sam dived in, body and breeches, and started a war to end wars." This flood made homeless 700,000 people and, according to Secretary Herbert Hoover, destroyed \$400,000,000 worth of property, and that's when "congress got riled and passed a law with teeth in it, 325,000,000 teeth."

"The Flood Control Act," passed by Congress on May 15, 1928, is much broader in scope than were the ordinances of the Spanish governors who ordered the riparian owners to build levees to protect their own lands under penalty of having them forfeited to the crown. There was no hair-splitting in the law which proclaimed all construction work "under the provisions of

this Act shall be built in a manner and of a character which will fully and amply protect the adjacent lands. . . . The sum of \$325,000,000 is hereby authorized to be appropriated for this purpose."

Section 2 of "The Flood Control Act" is a belated acknowledgment to those riparian owners who fought so heroically during those long and bitter years when Uncle Sam denied any responsibility for the injurious acts of his mighty river:

Section 2. . . . As a full compliance with this principle in view of the great expenditure estimated at approximately \$292,000,000, heretofore made by the local interests in the alluvial valley of the Mississippi River for protection against the floods of that river; in view of the extent of national concern in the control of these floods in the interest of national prosperity, the flow of interstate commerce, and the movement of the United States mails; and, in view of the gigantic scale of the project, involving flood waters of a volume and flowing from a drainage area largely outside the States most affected, and far exceeding those of any other river in the United States, no local contribution to the project herein adopted is required.

The "Flood Control Act" of 1928 contains no "little hair-splitting distinctions" like those that irked far-seeing Henry Clay, and it has already brought more benefits to the twelve beneficiary states than the Swamp Land Acts that were passed nearly a century ago.

## THE LITTLE OBELISK IN THE CATHEDRAL SQUARE IN NEW ORLEANS\*

By ANDRÉ LAFARGUE

In our far-famed *Vieux Carré*, Royal Street is unquestionably the most picturesque, historic and romantic of the streets of "Old New Orleans." Its local appeal, its colorful appearance of combined French and Spanish architecture, whisper to us softly and yet imperiously as we stroll and linger off and on in its entire stretch from Canal Street to Esplanade Avenue.

It must be admitted, however, that as we enter the street from the Canal Street end, the first three blocks thereof have now a commercial and modern aspect which is neither suggestive of the past nor of its lingering memories, with the sole exception of the building occupied today by the American Legion and its activities. The facades and interior courtyards of the antique and novelty shops, bounded by Conti and Bienville streets on the *rue Royale*, likewise bear some few traces of their former residential splendor and architectural harmony.

Taken, however, in its entire length—formerly the site of one of the many drainage canals that reclaimed the land of an alluvial character, which formerly made up the *Vieux Carré*, and which for irrigation and sanitary purposes had been divided in checkerboard fashion into squares or blocks, ("islets," as they were known to the early residents) one hundred meters square, 300 by 300 feet—Royal Street fully deserves its regal appellation. It is indeed "Royal" in its present aspect, in the richness of the recollections which it brings up, and in the feeling which irresistibly grows upon those who frequent it and who are enamored of the past and of the glorious traditions of a physical and spiritual character which wrote history of an undeniable character primarily on Royal Street and on the adjacent thoroughfares of the *Vieux Carré*.

The atmosphere and spell of "The Street" grow as you get nearer and nearer to its culminating historical and romantic splendor, the little Cathedral Square or Garden which faces Royal Street and from which Orleans Street, the main dividing line of

\* A paper read before the Louisiana Historical Society at its regular monthly meeting, February 22, 1944.

the *Vieux Carré*, starts, with its perspective extending to the former ramparts of the old city and to the square known today as "Beauregard Square" and which in my infancy I knew as "Congo Square," a less aristocratic but infinitely more picturesque popular designation. This "Beauregard Square" and the huge proportions of the Auditorium form a drop or background to dear old Orleans Street—named after the Regent of France—of massive appearance, toned down to some extent and softened by the Square with its verdure and space. With time and the march of events the Auditorium seen from Royal Street through the perspective of Orleans will assume a mellowness that the past and daily contact alone know how to impart in mysterious and masterful fashion.

What a delightful spot this "Cathedral Square" on Royal Street, with its flanking *ruelles* or alleys, one to the left as you face the garden, named historically and picturesquely *Allée du Père Antoine*, "Father Antoine's Alley", and not "St. Anthony's Alley" as so many designate it erroneously, for it should be borne in mind that the alley was named after Fra Antonio de Sedella, who certainly in his own way was a good and holy man, but whose life and activities should not be confused with those of the great saint, who among others, made Padua, his native city, one of fame and international prestige. The alley to the right as you face the river, was very properly given the name of the Duke of Orleans, the Regent of France, after whom New Orleans was named, and is to some extent the logical continuation of Orleans Street. Today, as in the case of the sister alley, there are two signs which designate it to the attention of the tourists and passers-by; one proclaims that it is "Orleans Alley," and the other one, feeling that the name of the far-famed family of "Orleans," a family that furnished kings to France and other nations, does not carry with it sufficient glory and prestige to interest the pedestrian, does not hesitate to proclaim slyly, shamelessly and arrogantly that it is "Pirates Alley". To my mind, as there have never been pirates in the royal family of Orleans, the compliment is of a rather dubious character. Any number of efforts on the part of the New Orleans Association of Commerce, the municipality, and even "A Labas" of New Orleans *Item* fame, to remedy the situation have failed disastrously. Beautiful and historic "Orleans Alley" is now known to the great majority of tourists and even of good citizens of this community as "Pirates Alley". I strongly suspect that the romantic and piratical crews of sketch-

ers, designers, painters and artists of high and low degree who append their products annually on the iron fence of the Cathedral Square on Royal Street are responsible for this erroneous appellation. May the shades of Captain Kidd and of Jean and Pierre Lafitte disturb their much-needed slumbers!

Recently, as the result of improvements made in the appearance and general arboreal design of the "Little Cathedral Square or Garden," and while this work was still going on, I was asked by any number of my friends and acquaintances, and even by some of my fellow members of the "Vieux Carré" and "Upper Pontalba Building" commissions, whether there was any history attached to the small but harmoniously proportioned white obelisk which adorns the Square and which pedestrians always stop to look at and to ponder over. I was also asked by the same people and by the caretakers of the Square, the good fathers of the St. Louis Cathedral, members of the Oblate Order, to write this paper and to embody therein the true story of this, the only monument erected to the French—strange as it may seem—who founded, developed and preserved for so many years this beloved city of ours.

The history of this obelisk dates back to 1857. It is hallowed with age, sentiment and the purpose which it is now serving and has always served from the time of its erection. Like so many monuments of the same design and character, it has been built to perpetuate the memory of the dead and to mark the last earthly resting place of those who have joined their forefathers and have crossed the "great divide." Of Egyptian origin, the quadrangular, tapering and pointed white marble column has been used in Egyptian architecture for many purposes: to ornament the entrance to a metropolis or to a necropolis, or to a vast assembly hall, a square, a temple or meeting place. It has been used also to grace the center of a square and also to surmount and designate funeral grounds. The obelisk dates back, so historians tell us, to the days of Moses himself. The Romans made use of it as trophies which they brought back from the Egyptian plains or deserts or from the gates of ancient temples and cities like those of Thebes, and from other edifices of the lands of the Pharaohs. Today, in the Eternal City and in that section thereof known politically and geographically as the "Vatican City" obelisks are to be found in most of the important squares of the capital of Italy. And, of course, as we well know, the "obelisk" figures very

prominently in our own American architecture, of recent or ancient origin. We find it in our parks, athletic grounds, or in our ornate cemeteries. It very often designates places of historic interest and adorns the homes of the living as well as of the dead. In Washington, the great monument that bears the name of the founder of the Republic, the "Father of his country," George Washington, is an obelisk of towering height and proportions; and the site of the famous Battle of New Orleans, on the historic plains of Chalmette, is likewise marked by an obelisk of graceful proportions. But all this is "another story," as Kipling would say, and I am not here to discourse on obelisks, their origin and their appropriate character in present-day architecture. I am only concerned with the diminutive one on Royal Street in the Cathedral Square.

Getting back to my story, I will state that in the year 1857 a severe yellow fever epidemic—one of the most disastrous in the local history of that scourge—was raging in both the Mexican and the Louisiana countries. The port of Vera Cruz in Mexico was particularly infested with the fever. In its harbor rode the *Tonnerre* (the *Thunder*) of the French Imperial Navy, a small vessel, one of the size of a destroyer of today or of even smaller tonnage. The *aviso* type of ship in the French Navy of those days was used as a dispatch carrier and likewise as a naval courier to connect the mother country with her distant colonies.

The *Thunder* was commanded by Lieutenant Maudet, a gallant French naval officer who had fought in the Baltic and had earned decorations and praise from his government and his superiors. The crew consisted of eighty men. Several of them became ill and died in the harbor. The commanding officer felt that perhaps the situation would improve if he set sail and removed his vessel from what he thought was the center of infection. He left Vera Cruz for Havana and New Orleans. While in the Gulf of Mexico several of the survivors contracted the dreadful *vomito negro*, as it was then known, and on August 2, 1857, Commander Maudet, in the face of a very acute situation which daily became worse and through which he was being deprived of the few members of the crew that were absolutely necessary for the manning of the ship, decided that he would ascend the Mississippi and seek much-needed relief and medical attention from the Lazaret, or "Quarantine Station" as it was then called, situated at the head of the passes, some little distance upstream. This Quar-

tine Station was located, at that time, some eighty miles below the city of New Orleans. There are still faint traces of the large brick building which constituted at the time the headquarters of the institution. There were also in 1857, on the same spot on the river, isolated pavilions or outer buildings and a small cemetery adjoining the Lazaret.

The sick members of the crew were immediately hospitalized and given the best of medical attention to be had at the time. Daily deaths had to be registered among them, followed by a simple but deeply touching funeral service in a setting that nature had not made particularly attractive, the alluvial and almost denuded shores of "Old Man River" as he nears the many mouths through which he reaches the vast expanse of the Gulf of Mexico.

On August 7, 1857, the commander himself, Lieutenant Maudet, became a victim of the terrible disease. Worn out and harassed, both physically and mentally, Commander Maudet was stricken down after he had nursed and buried several of his officers and men, both at sea and in the Lazaret in Louisiana. The French Consul in New Orleans, at the time, Count Mejan, duly apprised of the arrival of the *Thunder* at the mouth of the river and of the predicament of the French vessel and its crew, dispatched at once to the Lazaret a very famous French surgeon who practiced in New Orleans, in an effort to save the life of the commander of the ship and of those who were still able to undergo efficient medical treatment. Commander Maudet was given the best of medical attention and nursed personally by Doctor Joubert, as the archives of the French Consulate General at New Orleans bear witness, with considerable devotion, and as a result the gallant commander was saved at a time when his life had become so very precious to his surviving companions, by then reduced to a pitifully small handful of men.

Doctor Joubert, in his letters to the French Consul at New Orleans, praises very highly the services rendered by Doctor Thorps, the physician in charge of the Quarantine Station, and by the commander of the station, a customhouse official by the name of Kennedy. Doctor Joubert writes that both of these high-minded and serviceable American officials had been of great and much-needed assistance and had performed their services without any thought whatever of their personal safety or of the limits of their physical endurance.

The French officer who took charge of the ship after his commander had been stricken down writes that Doctor Joubert, through his personal ministrations, saved the life of his patient, Commander Maudet. The letter which he wrote to the French Consul is couched in touching and deeply moving terms and is very eulogistic of the French surgeon.

The disease in its epidemic form was finally conquered, either through medical attention or because there were none left that it could affect among the members of the sadly decimated crew, and the commanding officer of the *Thunder* gave orders on the 19th of the month to weigh anchor and set sail for Havana. Prior to the departure of the French vessel from American waters the members of the French crew who had died at the Quarantine Station were buried in the small cemetery adjoining the Lazaret, and Lieutenant Maudet had their last resting places marked with wooden crosses, and their names, dates of birth and death, inscribed thereon. There were only twenty men left of the original eighty who had enlisted at the time of the departure from France and who originally manned the ship, that were able to serve usefully in the handling of the unfortunate *Thunder*, as she left the Quarantine Station, still flying the black flag, emblematical of the plague which it still carried in its hulk and which turned out to be a very necessary warning or precaution, as thirteen more of the crew contracted the disease on the way back to Havana and had to be sent to the Lazaret in that port on arrival. Three more had died during the trip from the Mississippi to Havana, the last one being the head surgeon of the ship, who had succumbed to the disease because of his worn out and physically depleted condition at the time that he contracted it.

Of the twelve men left at the Quarantine Station near the mouth of the Mississippi because they were too ill to accompany their comrades at the time the *Thunder* sailed for Havana, six died at the Lazaret and the surviving six were later on transferred to Havana by a ship that sailed from New Orleans for the Cuban port.

After several months spent in the harbors of Havana and Fort de France, Martinique, to be refitted with supplies and men and to enable the sick and convalescent to recuperate fully and safely, the ill-fated French vessel left for the home country in July, 1858. She landed her crew at Rochefort, an Atlantic French port.

On their arrival at Rochefort the survivors of the ill-fated cruise called upon the commander of the ship, Lieutenant Maudet, and handed him four hundred francs, in those days eighty dollars, with the request that this sum of money be used to mark definitely the last resting place of their comrades in Louisiana, who had died bravely in the service of their country. Altogether thirty officers and men out of an original crew of eighty had died of the disease. They were not all buried at the Louisiana Quarantine Station. Some were interred in Havana and others in Vera Cruz, and some were buried at sea; but in the minds of the survivors their names could be kept and properly recorded and remembered through a marker of bronze or other durable material, erected at the place where the majority had been left on the banks of "Old Man River" sleeping the sleep of heroes, and as a matter of fact in soil that at one time for nearly one hundred years had flown the lily-bedecked and the tricolor flags of their own country, France.

As these brave men handed their touching monetary contribution to their commander, Lieutenant Maudet, they stated, through their spokesman, that they knew full well the amount was a very small one, all that they could spare from their meager pay, and that they did not expect a beautiful monument to be erected with the money which they had raised for the purpose of keeping alive the names and the memories of their fallen comrades. "All that we want," said they, in their own rude, simple and Breton-tinged French, "is that the marker be made of solid and durable material and that the names of our comrades be registered on it. Let it be a plaque or marker of bronze or marble, bearing their good, honest names, which can be read easily and for some time to come." And they added: "They certainly deserve it." In handing over this money and in expressing their wish, they furnished Commander Maudet with the full names and surnames of their comrades, those who had died in Louisiana and in Havana harbor and those that were resting in the depths of the ocean. This gesture was indeed one of solidarity and comradeship which seafaring men, whether in the armed service or in the mercantile service of their country, all over the world, do not hesitate to make under similar conditions. Commander Maudet, with tears in his eyes and deeply moved by what his men had just done and said, promised that he would see to it

that their wishes were carried out. He went to Paris and sought an interview with the then Minister of the French Navy, as the Secretary of the Navy is known in France officially, Admiral Hamelin, at that time, one of the naval heroes of the Crimean and Algerian naval campaigns, who led the bombardment of Sebastopol in Russian Crimea and who covered himself with glory at the siege and capture of Algiers in Northern Africa. The Admiral was so impressed with the generous thought and solicitude of the survivors of the *Thunder* that he added five hundred francs of his own money to the four hundred raised by the crew and he promised that he would use his personal influence with the Emperor Napoleon III, so that proper recognition might be given to Doctor Joubert and to the American physician, Doctor Thorps, who had rendered such priceless services to the officers of the *Thunder* and to their men, as the ship lay at anchor in front of the Quarantine Station in the Lower Mississippi. His efforts in that direction were very successful. The Admiral was requested by the Emperor to send to each of the physicians a *de luxe* set of surgical instruments of the latest pattern, with a suitable inscription on gold plates encrusted on each instrument and bearing each the imperial arms and monogram. Each doctor was also presented by the French Government with a set of Bourgy and Jacob's *Treatise on Anatomy*, richly illustrated and bound in morocco embossed with the imperial monogram. As an additional gift, a large case containing a supplemental collection of surgical instruments of all sizes and descriptions, to be used daily in urgent calls, was presented to each of the two surgeons who had attended the officers and crew of the ill-fated *Thunder* in their hour of grave peril at the Quarantine Station in Louisiana. Both Doctor Joubert and Doctor Thorps wrote very gracious letters of acknowledgment of this precious gift and extended their profuse and hearty thanks through the French Consul at New Orleans. Doctor Joubert, a veteran of the French Navy and a Knight of the French Legion of Honor, stated very modestly that he did not feel that he had done anything beyond the line of duty. He further stated that it had given him great comfort and joy to know and feel that he had saved the life of the commander of the ship and of some of the men, "with the help and able cooperation of my distinguished colleague of the United States Quarantine Station."

Upon receipt of the nine hundred francs sent by the French Government for the erection of the monument which we are discussing in this paper, the French Consul here saw at once that the sum of money would be totally inadequate to build a suitable monument to the dead of the *Thunder* buried in Louisiana soil and elsewhere. He spoke of his predicament to his fellow citizens in New Orleans, and magic like he received an additional sum of money which raised the total available to \$700 in our own money, \$500 of which were contributed by the French colony of our city to add to the \$180 or nearly \$200 raised by the survivors of the crew and donated by Admiral Hamelin out of his own funds.

The type and design of the monument were carefully discussed and adopted. In August, 1859, two years after the death of the men, victims of the terrible yellow fever epidemic of 1857, it was erected on the site of the cemetery of the Lazaret, as it was then known. It stood in the center of two parallel rows of graves, eight in each row. It consisted of a pedestal of pure white Carrara marble, in the shape of an altar of Grecian design, the corners of which were ornamented with entablatures, also of Grecian conception and handsomely fluted from top to bottom. The pedestal proper rested on a marble base. It was surmounted by an obelisk, truncated at the top, of some six feet in height and crowned with an urn of graceful proportions and design. On the panels of the pedestal was written in carved letters of gold, the following: "A la memoire de trente marins faisant partie de l'Equipage de l'Aviso à Vapeur de la Marine Impériale le TONNERRE. Décédés à la quarantaine de la Nouvelles Orléans, en aout 1857." And farther down on the same panel: "Erigé par ordre de S. Excellence, l'Amiral Hamelin, ministre de la Marine de l'Empereur Napoleon III." All of which, translated into English, reads: "To the memory of thirty seamen, members of the crew of the Steam Corvette the THUNDER of the French Imperial Navy, who died at the Quarantine of New Orleans, in August 1857." And "Erected by order of His Excellency, Admiral Hamelin, minister of the Navy of Emperor Napoleon III."

The names inscribed on the three remaining panels or sides of the Grecian pedestal are the following:

Rambour (Pierre Etienne Paul) ensign;  
Caullière (Lucien) ensign;  
Mongin (Nicholas Delmance) ship's head surgeon;  
Lapenne (Victor Daniel) able seaman;  
Chéruais (Jacques Aubin) chief mate;  
Thepot (Herve Ernest) gunner;  
Rio (Pierre Marie) quartermaster;  
Teynac (Jean Napoléon) able seaman;  
Lebras (Jean Marie) able seaman;  
Emérit (Pierre) seaman;  
Jubeau (Francois Marie) able seaman;  
Le Bailliffe (Paul Herve) able seaman;  
Emérit (Pierre) seaman;  
Ledet (Jean Louis Felix) able seaman;  
Coppin (Armand) able seaman;  
Reverday (Jules) able seaman;  
Hely (Edouard Pierre) able seaman;  
Hamon (Jean) able seaman;  
Wils (Edouard Gustave Charles) able seaman;  
Caloni (Jean Baptiste) able seaman;  
Lepoetre (Felix Victor Romain) able seaman;  
Chalton (Marie Joseph) able seaman;  
Querre (Jean Marguerite Francois) stoker;  
Labbe (Francois Celestin) able seaman;  
Lanteaumé (Etienne Léon) stoker;  
Hummel (Emile) master at arms;  
Gama (Henri Désiré Francois) chief storekeeper;  
Luce (Thomas Francois) assistant storekeeper;  
Laniou (Yves) baker;  
Carletto (Giovanni) head cook;  
Janotti (Jean) mess steward.

Permission to erect this monument on the site of the old Quarantine was given by the Board of Health and the proper authorities. Doctor Thorps, in charge at the Quarantine Station, was requested by his superiors to furnish every possible facility to the French Consul, Count Mejan, and to his committee made up of the leading French citizens of our community.

Though solidly built and anchored in the ground as firmly as possible, the monument was damaged to some extent in 1862, during the Civil War, by high water and by a storm. At the instance of Mr. C. Delery, president of the Board of Health of Louisiana, it was graciously repaired at the cost and expense of the state, under whose jurisdiction, at that time, health matters

and the Quarantine Station on the river stood. On this occasion the State Board of Health wrote to the French Consul in New Orleans that "The State of Louisiana and its Board of Health were happy and honored to be able to give to the French Government this small measure of the great sympathy and affection which existed between Louisianians and their former mother country."

The monument erected at the Quarantine Station withstood the adversities of time, events and weather conditions. It remained for over fifty years on its original site, though the Quarantine Station in the meantime had been moved from the place and that branch of the administrative service of Louisiana confided to the United States Government and placed entirely under its jurisdiction, as well as the customs, which the Federal Government has always operated as a branch of the Treasury Department of the United States of America. In the early part of the present century the obelisk still stood on its pedestal on its original site. I saw it myself from the decks of the ships that I traveled on from the city to Pilot Town and to Port Eads where the Bar Pilots, several of whom were my clients at the time, had stations which I visited during the fishing season and on pleasure trips to the happy breeding grounds of the noble pelicans and other specimens of Louisiana bird life. In one of the furious equinoctial gales which sweep with considerable violence the head of the passes and the small and narrow stretch of land on each side of the mighty Mississippi, as it reaches the Gulf through its outlets, the monument finally tottered, broke into several pieces and gradually was covered with mud and vegetation of an alluvial character. "Gone with the wind," it would have remained and disappeared completely, had it not been that Pierre Lacaze, Vice Consul of France and acting consul at the time—1914—some twenty-five years after I had last seen it, in going through the interesting and historical archives of the French Consulate, (which by the way contain most valuable historical documents dealing with New Orleans and with the consular jurisdiction of France over Louisiana and all the adjoining southern states,) came across the history of this monument and read it most carefully. From these selfsame archives I have culled all that precedes, and from a perusal of these papers, yellowed with age, we both conceived the idea that something should be done to try to locate the remnants of the monument, if any were to be found, and to re-erect it, if this was still feasible.

I told Mr. Lacaze that I remembered having seen the monument emerging from the banks or levees amid considerable vegetation and what seemed to be the abandoned cemetery, close to the brick walls of the main building of the old Quarantine Station. My friends, the Bar Pilots, confirmed my recollection, but none had seen a single vestige of the monument for several years preceding 1914. The Quarantine Station had been removed from its former site, eighty miles below New Orleans, to the very head of the passes, at a place known today as Pilot Town, some twenty miles farther down, a site today approximately one hundred miles from the city of New Orleans by way of the river. This, combined with the fact that vegetation had completely covered the old Quarantine Station and all visible traces of the burial ground, as well as all the broken parts of the monument which annually sank deeper and deeper into the alluvial soil, rendered our research and our inquiries well-nigh fruitless. In February, 1914, after we had discussed the matter at length and seemed to be making no headway, and after we had definitely established the site of the old Quarantine Station, we entrained on the old Grand Isle and Fort Jackson Railroad, at its antediluvian station on the other side of the river, and went down to Buras, the terminal point on the west bank of the Mississippi River. The party was made up of Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Lacaze, my wife and myself. At Buras the *Jennie Wilson*, pride of the Bar Pilots, was waiting for us and ferried us over to Ostrica, some few miles below Buras, on the other or east side of the mighty stream which is already rather wide at that particular point.

We found the main brick building of the old Quarantine Station, or rather sections of the walls still standing, but of course there was no trace whatsoever of the wooden structures that made up the Lazaret, or health station, with its isolated pavilions. Headed by a guide, we decided to explore weather-beaten ground behind the new levees that had been constructed and which afforded some protection to the alluvial land. The underbrush was heavy and well-nigh impenetrable in certain spots, covered at intervals by clumps of trees of a stunted growth that had defied the elements, the march of time, and other destroying factors. For several hours we indulged, all four of us, in this "Stanley, the explorer, work"—as I called it—on a minor scale. I must confess that the two ladies in the party did not seem to relish particularly the work. They, however, "manfully" stuck

to us and kept their keen eyes glued to the soil and its heavy undergrowth. We finally came to a spot, near a tree of greater dimensions than the others, and there found traces of former habitations, and all of a sudden our feet struck a pile of bricks and pieces of marble and we knew, after examination of the fragments, that we had finally found the spot where the cemetery stood long years before and where the monument had been built. The ladies, highly elated by this discovery, were very helpful in picking up various pieces of the pedestal and we finally located the obelisk, the main section of the most important part of the monument, and the gracefully draped urn. The urn had been wrenched from the top of the obelisk and the latter had broken into two pieces in its fall to the ground, after the pedestal and the foundation had been undermined by the elements and the rough usage of time.

Piece by piece, as you would with a puzzle, we reconstituted and re-erected the monument and stood proudly by our find having photographs made of the various stages of this laborious recovery from the underbrush and reconstitution. I have a full set of these photographs taken at the time by Mr. Lacaze and myself and the two ladies in turn, and they constitute a very remarkable and authentic photographic exhibit of the work that was done under most unpleasant conditions and likewise of the physical appearance and topography of this desolate spot.

We brought back to New Orleans from this first trip of an exploratory nature, some eighty miles down the "*Father of Waters*," the bronze plaque on which the inscription above-mentioned had been recorded, as evidence of the fact that we had found the monument and that there could be no question of its authenticity and location. Both Mr. Lacaze and myself had previously decided, while we were still at Ostrica and on the site of the old Quarantine Station, that we would exert every effort to have the monument rebuilt where it formerly stood or some measures taken to again mark definitely the place where so many of the brave sons of France had been buried while in the service of their country and in a distant land.

When we came back to the city we ascertained that the land belonged to Peter Torre, a very prominent merchant of the day, who very generously told us that he would extend every facility to perpetuate the memory of the brave seamen who were buried

on his grounds. Mr. Torre even stated to us that he would be glad to contribute out of his own pocket towards the reconstruction of the monument. We then organized a committee or small group of French citizens and citizens of French descent, representative of the French societies and of the Franco-American institutions. The committee headed by J. M. Vergnolle, at the time president of the leading French Society in New Orleans, the *Société de Beinfaisance et d'Assistance Mutuelle*, commonly known as "The French Society," and of which the author of this paper was appointed secretary and treasurer, was designated as the *Comité du Souvenir Français*, the "French Souvenir Committee," and was organized solely for the purpose of determining what should be done to re-erect the monument and to effect the necessary repairs. It met at the French Consulate General in New Orleans and decided eventually that the monument should be brought to New Orleans and re-erected in a very suitable spot, in the hallowed ground of the St. Louis Cathedral Garden, where it could be seen by all passers-by and where it would remind us daily of the valiance and spirit of heroism which always have been characteristics of the French race and more particularly of the French pioneers and founders of this section of the United States of America. It was decided—and very wisely—by our committee that the purpose of the monument could only be achieved by rebuilding it on top of the ashes of the heroes whose memory it commemorated, if such were to be found. When specialists on the subject—leading undertakers of this community—were consulted, they laughed at us and told us that all traces of the coffins and their contents had long since disappeared under the corrosive and dissolving influences of the tides, the wind and time. We were told that we would find no vestige of the remains of the unfortunate victims of the yellow fever epidemic of 1857. Our attention was called to the fact that fifty-seven years had elapsed since the victims of the epidemic had been buried and that they had very likely been buried rather summarily and in roughly hewn and poorly constructed coffins. We decided, however, after further conference with Fernand Laudumiey, a descendant of a well-known French family here and one of our leading undertakers, who did not share the views of his colleagues as to the disappearance of all trace of the coffins and of the mortal remains of the members of the crew of the *Tonnerre* (Thunder), buried at the old Quarantine Station, that when we went to search for these remains at some future date we would enlist the assistance

of Mr. Laudumiey and of his gravediggers, and would also bring with us a large box or coffin into which we would transport whatever was left of the mortal frames of the French seamen buried at Ostrica. And this was a very wise decision, as subsequent events revealed.

I should have stated, a while ago, that Father Racine, the beloved pastor of the St. Louis Cathedral at the time, had offered generously to allow us to use the Cathedral Garden for the reconstruction of the monument and that we had accepted the offer.

On June 22, 1914, a delegation made up of the following gentlemen, designated by Mr. Lacaze, the French Vice Consul: Messrs. Jules de Laage, chancellor of the French Consulate; André Lafargue, counsel to the consulate and secretary of the committee; Rene Lacroix, E. Dubar and James J. A. Fortier, accompanied by an undertaker and a gravedigger, went to the old Quarantine Station near Ostrica, by way of the old Fort Jackson and Grand Isle Railroad, and at Buras were ferried over by the Bar Pilot boat *Jennie Wilson*, as had been done at the time the first trip was made to the place.

I shall never forget my experience on that day. The weather was very hot and, as I have previously stated, the place desolate and offering very little shelter or relief from the intense heat, as there were very few shade trees on the place. The ground had been drained at one time through long and at times rather deep ditches, running horizontally and perpendicularly to the river. These ditches were concealed with a heavy growth which made progress through the place rather difficult. The archives at the French Consulate had indicated that the bodies of the sailors had been buried in a double row paralleling the river embankment, and that the monument had been built in the middle thereof. The foundations and a hugh piece of the obelisk itself showed where the monument formerly stood, and we measured off the ground in which the digging was to be effected. The monument stated that it had been erected to perpetuate the memory of thirty members of the crew, but only nineteen had been actually buried on the spot. Others had been buried either in Vera Cruz or in that huge and bottomless grave of so many seamen, the waters of the deep, in this instance the Gulf of Mexico.

The ground was dug to the right of the foundation, facing the river, and after long and tedious work, at a depth of about

four feet beneath the soil our gravedigger reported that he had struck a hard object. The earth was carefully removed and we found our first coffin. With considerable care it was taken out of the soil and opened. We bent over and saw with deep emotion that the entire skeleton that it contained had been preserved. The bones were carefully and reverently spread under a tree on the top of which we had placed the flag of France, the glorious tricolor of the Republic. That day we proceeded with our macabre work until 4:30 P. M. So as to give the gravediggers an hour's rest and because of the heat, we adjourned further work from 4:30 to 5:30 P. M. At that time we resumed the digging which we pursued until darkness fell. By that time five bodies had been disinterred and a sixth one located.

On the following day, June 23rd, a Wednesday, we resumed our work at 5:30 in the morning and four more coffins were located and disinterred, which added to the six previously uncovered and lifted from the ground in the same row, made a total of ten bodies disinterred. The trench which we had dug to the right of the monument and from which we recovered the ten bodies above-mentioned was approximately sixty feet in length, by twelve in width and four in depth. We then dug on the other side of the monument and found an eleventh body, and soon afterwards, guided by the position in which the coffin had been placed, we found the other bodies in this second row paralleling the first. By 7:30 P. M. of that day we had unearthed a total of fifteen coffins and their contents.

On Thursday morning, the 24th of June, we dug up the four remaining bodies, or rather their skeletons. To make sure that we had found all of the coffins marked by the emplacement of the monument, we dug the ground on each side, prolonging the trench at each extremity, and we likewise dug the ground beyond the two trenches just referred to, without coming across any further bodies. We thus made sure that we had recovered every one of the coffins which had been placed in the ground in 1857, at the time of the death of the unfortunates who had succumbed to the dreaded epidemic.

Each skeleton or set of bones, which had been kept separately, was placed in a shroud, carefully wrapped up, and they were then all deposited reverently into the metallic-lined huge box or coffin which the undertaker had brought, and the bottom

of which had been covered with twigs of verdure and whatever wild flowers we had been able to gather. A rudely-made cross, from branches of small trees, was placed on top of these shrouds and the whole covered with a layer of branches and wild flowers. A French flag was spread on the remains before the lid was screwed on and the coffin was then carefully and hermetically sealed. We likewise uprooted a small tree which had grown on the site and placed it on the coffin. We felt that we should bring back with us this mute but nonetheless eloquent witness from Nature of the vicissitudes which the monument and those entrusted to its safe keeping had endured from the elements and from "Father Time."

On Thursday, June 25th, the coffin was brought back to Algiers. The train arrived at midnight. At the station Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Lacaze and the author of this paper who had left by an earlier train were waiting and helped to remove the coffin to the hearse. On Saturday, the 27th of the month, the little tree which formerly stood on the site of the cemetery at the Quarantine Station, which we had brought back with us, was solemnly planted near the spot where the monument was to be reconstructed, in the Cathedral Square. The committee thus took formal and initial possession of this spot of ground. The ground itself was blessed by Reverend Father Lefebvre of the Oblate Fathers. This very touching ceremony took place in the presence of Messrs. Lacaze, Lafargue, Pons, De Laage and Lacroix, all members of the committee.

Under the laws of Louisiana and of the City of New Orleans special authorization had to be obtained from the constituted authorities for the use of the Cathedral Square, or a portion thereof, for burial purposes. It was my privilege and honor to have an ordinance passed which dedicated the spot where the monument stands today as burial ground for those who are now deposited therein. I met with full cooperation of the State and City Boards of Health in the matter. Albert Weiblen, one of the best-known and most competent mortuary monument builders, was placed in charge of the work and built a large and deep grave or vault heavily cemented and reinforced.

On July 14, 1914, just two weeks prior to the outbreak of World War No. 1, a mortuary service was held at the St. Louis Cathedral, which had been most appropriately draped and decorated for the occasion with mortuary streamers and with the tri-

color of France. Over the main altar flew the papal colors of white and yellow. Escorted by a detail of sixteen of the municipal police in full-dress uniform and by a guard of honor from the Jackson Barracks regular troops commanded by Lieutenant Noyes, as well as by a detachment from the state militia, the large and handsome coffin was placed on a bier or catafalque in front of the main altar. A solemn high mass of requiem was sung by the Very Reverend Canon Racine, assisted by several deacons and priests of French birth and from New Orleans and the adjacent parishes. Most Reverend Bishop J. M. Laval, Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans, presided at the ceremony and gave benediction to the assembly and a final blessing to the bodies in the coffin. The church was crowded with the faithful and the many who had been drawn to the ceremony because of its being held on the national feast day of the French Republic.

The honorary pallbearers were: Pierre Lacaze, the French Vice Consul; Dr. T. Carew Hunt, the English Consul General; I. T. Moore, City Attorney; Mr. Paul Capdevielle; Colonel Hugues de la Vergne; Major Allison Owen of the Washington Artillery; Dr. Olivier Pothier; Dr. Rousselle; and Messrs. Sebastien Roy, E. Pons, L. Amardeil, and Buisson. The active pallbearers were Messrs. André Lafargue, E. Dubar, R. Lacroix, Jules de Laage, James J. A. Fortier, Emile Ecuyer, president of the French Union, Bussiere Rouen, president of l'Athénée Louisianais, and Mr. Larroux. The mass was sung by a specially constituted and enlarged choir under the direction of Mrs. Theresa Cannon Buckley, the talented organist of the St. Louis Cathedral. Military commands were issued to the military detachments which throughout the mass stood at attention on each side of the catafalque and in the main alley, at different portions of the mass.

Following the solemn absolution pronounced by the Bishop, as he circled the bier and spread holy water over it, the coffin was brought to its last resting place in the Cathedral Garden, preceded by a military band, the soldiery and the constituted federal, state and municipal authorities, and followed by a vast concourse of the citizenry of New Orleans of every class and condition, all deeply impressed by the significance of the occasion. Gathered around the vault which had been built by the Albert Weiblen Marble Works and which was soon to be topped by the newly reconstructed monument were the most eminent people of New Orleans and of Louisiana.

The Bishop first blessed the burial ground or vault, and inspiring addresses were then delivered by the Honorable Paul Capdevielle, a former Mayor of New Orleans and then State Auditor, who represented the Governor; by Pierre Lacaze, the French Vice Consul; and by Harold Newman, representing Mayor Behrman who was unable to attend the ceremony. Mr. Newman was at the time Commissioner of Police and Public Safety. Other officials present were: Honorable Clarence Hebert, Collector of the Port, representing the United States Government; Honorable Joseph A. Breaux, former Chief Justice of Louisiana; Major Allison Owen and a delegation from the Washington Artillery, including Captain Bryan Black, Majors Pothier and Devron, with a representation from each battalion.

The bier was blessed a last time and then lowered into the vault. After the vault had been covered a volley was fired over it by the military from Jackson Barracks and taps were sounded by a bugler from the Washington Artillery. Placed over the mound was a very large and handsome wreath of calla lilies, carnations and asparagus fern, tied together with huge streamers of red, white and blue.

I have given a rather minute description of this ceremony because, in the light of present events of such worldwide importance taking place in the four corners of the globe, it has a poignant significance which cannot escape any of us. This ceremony in the little Cathedral Square was a tribute paid by a great democracy, that of the United States of America, to thirty humble children of France who had died in time of peace it is true, but who had died while serving their country in foreign waters and on foreign soil. They had done their full duty while in the military service of their country. They had made the supreme sacrifice. What more could be expected of them? It is also very significant that this beautiful and inspiring ceremony should have taken place just two weeks, as it were, before the outbreak of the conflict known as World War No. 1, one in which the sons of France and these United States of America were to shed and to mingle their blood on French soil for the defense of all that they held in common made human life worthwhile living, individual and national dignity and honor, without which it is better indeed to be dead.

The monument was reconstructed, as it stands today, with the same pedestal or Grecian base, the same obelisk and the same

funeral urn topping it, just as we found them in the brush at the old Quarantine Station on the site of the old cemetery in February and in June of 1914. Upon its completion it was inaugurated with proper ceremonial, and the inscriptions on the four panels of the pedestal were again carved and regilded, with the names of the thirty French mariners properly cut into the marble.

The rebuilding of this monument on its present site required some little time. The work was done very thoroughly by a very competent marble specialist, Albert Weiblen, after the vault had been finished and the coffin containing the bones of the thirty seamen had been placed therein. On top of this vault a verdant mound arose, enclosed within proper marble coping with the emblem of the navy, the anchor, suitably carved on the corners, and with front steps leading to the Grecian altar or pedestal. This plot and the coping were added to the original monument, and in some instances the broken pieces were carefully cemented together or new pieces of replacement fitted in.

The monument as built in 1859 had cost approximately \$700. It required almost as much to disinter the bodies at the Quarantine Station and to bring them back to New Orleans, as well as the broken parts of the monument and to reconstruct same in the Cathedral Garden on its present site. We felt, however, that whatever cost such transfer and reconstruction would entail was one that should be met by the French colony and the descendants of the French in New Orleans, cheerfully and unstintingly, as this monument was the only one erected to the memory of the French who from the early days of the discoveries of Robert Cavalier de La Salle to the time of the rebuilding of this mortuary obelisk had never had their magnificent deeds and daring achievements perpetuated and consecrated by the slightest shaft or monument of any kind whatsoever. We felt that, small as it was, the "Little White Obelisk" in the Cathedral Square would make amends for the ingratitude and indifference shown by Louisianians towards the French who had founded and developed their city of New Orleans and most of the Mississippi Valley. And so the *Comité du Souvenir Francais en Louisiane* was formed to carry out the self-appointed task of rebuilding this monument as a tribute to the bravery and heroism of the early pioneers from France who had built, endowed and enriched what his-

torians later referred to as the Province of Louisiana, a vast territory from which eighteen states were carved out either partially or in their entirety.

In 1917, while World War No. 1 was still on, Captain C. Denier of the French Navy came to New Orleans. It was my privilege to show him the monument, and after I had told him its history he became so interested in the matter that he sent me, some time later, a bronze tablet on which stood the following inscriptions: "Monument retrouvé en fevrier 1914, rapporté le 25 juin 1914 et inauguré le 14 juillet 1914. Réédifié le 14 juillet 1914, au dessus des restes des marins du *Tonnerre* par les soins du *Comité du Souvenir Francais de la Louisiane*." ("A monument found in February 1914, brought back on June 25, 1914, and inaugurated on July 14, 1914. Reconstructed on the present site on July 14, 1914, over the remains of the sailors of the *Tonnerre* through the efforts of the Committee of the French Souvenir in Louisiana.") This bronze tablet was intended as a tribute to those who had discovered the monument and brought it back to New Orleans and had it reconstructed as it stands today. In his letter of transmittal Captain Denier stated:

I am this day sending you a plaque in bronze designed to perpetuate the very worthy work done by the "Committee" of which you were one of the leading spirits and through which the memory of my predecessors in Louisiana is kept alive and is being perpetuated. This plaque has been fashioned by French hands and is the result of French workmanship. It is fitting and proper that the work done by your committee should receive this mark of recognition on the part of a member of the French Navy who was deeply moved by the generous thought back of the reconstruction of the monument erected to the memory of our brave seamen who lost their lives during the yellow fever epidemic of 1857 in foreign waters. God bless you.

One would have thought that the poor victims of the yellow fever epidemic in 1857 on board of the small French steam vessel of the Imperial Navy, *Le Tonnerre* (*The Thunder*), would have been allowed to sleep in peace in their newly-provided resting place, "neath the shade of the Cathedral," but "Time marches on," as a famous moving picture tells us, and in its course provides us with unexpected and sometimes startling developments.

On October 11, 1934, nearly ten years ago, I was enjoying a delightful vacation at the summer home of my friends, Mr. and

Mrs. Henry Landry de Freneuse, on the picturesque banks of the Bogue Falaya, reading the news of the assassination of the young and brilliant Alexander, King of Yugoslavia, and of Mr. Barthou, the Foreign Minister of France, at Marseille, France, when I was informed by my gracious hostess that long distance from New Orleans was calling me. Reverend Father Thomas had just advised the French Consulate General that at four o'clock in the morning a swiftly-driven automobile occupied by four inebriated young people had come tearing down Orleans Street and, failing to notice that the street came to an abrupt end on Royal Street, dashed into the iron gates of the metallic fence surrounding the Cathedral Square or Garden, broke the chain and padlock closing them, wrenched a portion of one of the portals, speeded up the mound on which stood the monument and finally toppled it over, coming to a stop with an unearthly noise caused by both the impact and the cries of the occupants. Father Thomas and his saintly companions in the Presbytery were rudely aroused from their slumbers, as were the other neighbors, even those who came home very late or very early by actual time computation. The French Consulate attaché who spoke to me over the telephone told me that Father Thomas was very much excited over the matter, that he had reported that two of the young people, both of them of the gentler sex, had fled after being sobered up by the collision. When he came to the spot where the crash had taken place, he found a young man and another girl companion weeping copiously and hysterically. Fortunately for them the obelisk and the pedestal, completely demolished, had fallen away from the vehicle and thus they were spared, although the automobile itself offered as sorry a sight as the broken monument.

I was asked to come to the rescue and to use all legal efforts necessary to have the damage repaired. The damage was a very serious one; in fact the monument seemed to have been again broken into as many pieces as when we first found it in the brush. The man who had caused the damage was fortunately insured, and I was given the sum of money necessary to rebuild the monument a third time. Another job for Albert Weiblen, the marble man, and one that he did again in excellent fashion, as the present condition of the monument reveals!

When the work was done recently in the Garden to beautify it with brick alleys and with symmetrically designed plots of ground containing lovely camelias and other flower bushes typical

of lovely New Orleans, any number of inquiries came to me in connection with the monument whose history I have just narrated. The "Vieux Carré Commission," the "Upper Pontalba Building Commission," and the "Vieux Carré Property Owners Organization" all wanted to know the true history connected with the little white obelisk and its urn, perched on a Grecian altar of classical design and harmonious proportions. It was suggested that I write this paper, and as you see I have done so, feeling that I had had a great deal to do with the recovery, transfer and rebuilding of the little landmark, which, though small in size, can boast of an eventful career.

May I hope that it will no longer be disturbed by the hand of man or by the accident of time. At nighttime as you gaze upon it, the huge statute of the Sacred Heart in its rear, with extended arms, seems to protect it from further incursion and disturbance from men. It is standing, however, in its shimmering whiteness and in its solemn silence as a reminder of those who are buried beneath it, but also as a reminder that they are sons of a country to which Louisiana is everlastingly indebted, old mother France of yesterday, weeping and sorrowful mother France of today, and unconquerable mother France of tomorrow, come back to her own. For all of this we must not forget that the monument of the French naval vessel, *The Thunder*, though silent, speaks eloquently of French heroism and French duty.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

By ANDRÉ LAFARGUE

*The Bayous of Louisiana.* By Harnett T. Kane. Illustrated with drawings by Tilden Landry and photographs. (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1943. Pp. viii, 340. \$3.50.)

The term "bayou" is essentially a Louisiana one. Topographically, physically, geologically, spiritually and otherwise you cannot conceive of a "bayou" being situated anywhere else than in our good State of Louisiana, and more especially so in southern Louisiana. There may be streams of water which through ignorance or deliberate and aggravated *lèse majesté* have been given the name of or designated by the appellation of a "bayou," although situated outside of the confines of Louisiana. But rest assured that it is not a real "bayou," worthy of the name. It is an upstart, a "parvenu" in the family of "bayous" which the trio of élite, Bayous St. John, Teche and Lafourche, genuine and authentic ancestors, would doubtless frown upon.

All of which leads me to state that Harnett T. Kane, the author of *Louisiana Hayride* of considerable merit and legitimate fame, in selecting as his subject for a second book on Louisiana the stream of water which more typically designates our State than any other, both in the physical and moral domains, has been most happily inspired.

*The Bayous of Louisiana* is unquestionably a book that every Louisianian who is interested in the geology, the history, the folklore, and the story of the fauna, flora and humanity of lower Louisiana should have on his bookshelf within easy and constant reach. It is not the story of every Louisiana bayou. That could not be encompassed in just one book, for each authentic "bayou" in our native State has a character of its own, its peculiar and individual traits. The book deals more particularly with those two famous bayous, Teche and Lafourche, the one winding languorously and capriciously, with unexpected twists and turns in a sylvan setting of incomparable grandeur and majesty, and the other a "Main Street on the Water," as it is rightfully and picturesquely named because of the uninterrupted and dense settlements on each side of the stream and also because it seeks its outlet in more direct fashion.

I do not know that anything has ever been written in more entertaining, interesting and instructive style than "Pattern—in Water and People," which ushers in most fittingly and comprehensively the four subdivisions of the book: "The Wet Front Yard," "The Longest Village Street," "The Garden of Eden" and "Where the Buggies Roll." Harnett T. Kane describes the lower Gulf coast of Louisiana, the perpetual struggle therein between man and nature, the geological transformations, whether through disappearance of land or new earthly formations, mostly brought about by the wedding of the "Father of Waters" to the mighty Gulf of Mexico, the erosion of the newly made lands and their uncertain character both as to duration and as to habitable characteristics, in his prelude and opening chapters, in a manner that holds the attention of the most profane. In other words, he makes very entertaining and instructive and consequently readable that which might have become dry and scientifically abstruse. The Louisiana reader, because of the book, gets better acquainted with the lower visage of his native land than he has ever been before. The mysterious land of Laffite's pirates, dotted, crisscrossed and checkerboarded as it were with streams of all dimensions and widths, its inlets, bays, its fabulous islands offshore, like Grand Isle, Last Island, Grande Terre, and inshore, like Cheniere Caminada and others, and the people that lived therein and that still thrive therein, such as the muskrat catchers and trappers, the fishermen, their language, customs and perilous mode of living, their outdoor life, which makes of them a race of hardy and outspoken, generous minded, hospitable human beings, are all described by the author in a vivid portrayal that one is not apt to forget.

Nor has anyone else written about the people and the folklore of Bayous Teche and Lafourche with as much authority and keen knowledge of the subject as Harnett T. Kane has displayed in the book which I am now discussing and which has really warmed my heart as a Louisianian fond and proud of his native State, of its natural beauty and of the picturesque and most interesting characteristics of the descendants of the Acadians who settled in the land of the Attakapas and whose thrift, love of the ancestral language and customs of France and Nova Scotia, whose deep religious fervor and convictions, and whose sense of honesty and sincerity have endeared them to all those who have met them, who have mingled with them, and who have had

a chance to observe them in their daily occupations, as Harnett T. Kane has. For, just as the genial author had become a close friend of the fishermen and trappers of the lowest coast, partaking of their open-air life and frugal existence, he had likewise lived among the good people of the Teche country and of the Lafourche region, enjoying their regard, their respect and their friendly confidence and disclosures.

The book is beautifully illustrated, and what the pen of the writer has left unsaid—perhaps purposely—the sketches and drawings of Tilden Landry, a master in that line, and the artistic photographs which profusely accompany the text more than supplement in visual, infallible and explanatory fashion of delicate subtlety anything left out in the narrative.

*The Bayous of Louisiana* contains barely over three hundred pages of text and illustration. The comprehensive character of the work, its historical, folklorish, geological, sociological and psychological features vest it with attributes of an encyclopedic character. I say unhesitatingly that the work is one of useful and unerring reference. In writing this book, Harnett T. Kane, in my own humble opinion, has done more than merely write a "story" of Louisiana and its lower coast people; he has given us information on the geology, topography and physical characteristics of that section of Louisiana, which for a long time had remained somewhat a closed book to us, save for the stories of a romantic character in which it served merely as a setting of natural splendor, of vague description and limitations. *The Bayous of Louisiana* has opened for use the "portals of the promised land" and has disclosed vistas of a most comprehensive character for those who have never seen the region and for those who become better, much better, acquainted with it, physically and spiritually, after reading the book. I heartily recommend it to my fellow Louisianians and to all my fellow Americans interested in folklore and its surrounding factors.

*L'histoire merveilleuse de la Louisiane française; chronique des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles et de la cession aux États-Unis* [*The Marvelous History of French Louisiana; a Chronicle of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries and of the Cession to the United States*]. By Régine Marie Ghislaine (Callaud-Belisle) Hubert-Robert. (New York: Editions de la Maison française, inc., c. 1941. Pp. ix, 374).

The function of the historian is to relate, truthfully, and accurately, in their chronological sequence, events and to portray the main actors thereof with due regard to veracity and to the circumstances that shaped their destiny. I take it that the narrative need not necessarily be a dry one and that a historian does not cease to be impartial or authoritative if he indulges in literary flights or allows his pen to portray facts and people in colorful and lyrical language, so long as he does not take liberties with the essential facts and their truthful occurrence.

Such is the case with the recent work of Mrs. Hubert-Robert, published by the "Editiones de la Maison française" at New York City, about 1941, and which I consider a most valuable contribution to the bibliography of the history of Louisiana.

As the title of the book implies, Mrs. Hubert-Robert has written strictly a history of French Colonial Louisiana and of the events which led up to and included the cession of the returned colony from Spain to France and from France to the United States of America, of which it is today a constituent section through the addition to this country of several States and portions of other States as well as of what is known today definitely as the State of Louisiana.

From beginning to end the work is of an absorbingly interesting character. The author justifies the title chosen, *Marvelous History*, by presenting the true story of the beginnings of the colony, of the founding of its principal settlements on the Gulf of Mexico and later on the banks of the lower Mississippi River, of the building of the forts on the upper Mississippi, and of the establishments effected on the tributaries and confluents.

The opening chapters, the arrival of the first white man on the banks of the "Father of Waters," the Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto, his death and picturesque burial in the turgid waters of the great stream, at nighttime, on a raft with burning torches, which constituted a scene of solemnity and awesome splendor that painters have time and again depicted; the long silence that succeeded this event in the middle of the sixteenth century, some fifty years after the discovery of America by Columbus; the explorations of the "Father of Waters" by Pere Marquette and Joliet to the mouth of the Arkansas, some one hundred and thirty years afterwards, in 1673; and finally the discovery of the mouth of the great river by Robert Cavelier de

La Salle and the solemn act and ritual performed on April 9, 1682, near the spot where the murky waters mingled and commingled with those of the mighty Gulf of Mexico, through which the immense territory recently covered by the indomitable Norman explorer and his companions in three frail canoes, was annexed to the crown of Louis the Magnificent, King of France and Navarre and fourteenth of the name, and was designated by the euphonious name of "Louisiana," are all events that prefaced the founding of the colony and which the genial writer describes in vivid and most colorful style; a tryptic brushed in inimitable manner with each panel having as a central figure Hernando de Soto, Pere Marquette, and that "Great Knight of the Virginal Forests and Undiscovered Lands," Robert Cavelier de La Salle.

And the vast and mighty portals of history being thrown open in masterful fashion and with sweeping and majestic style we are ushered into the period of actual settlements and accomplishments. The laborious beginning of Massacre Island (today Dauphin Island), of the two Biloxis, of Mobile and eventually of New Orleans by Pierre LeMoyne d'Iberville and Jean Baptiste LeMoyne de Bienville and their companions, the sufferings and privations of the early colonists, their petty jealousies, their intrigues, their heroic fight against the wild man and wilder nature, the lack of support in critical times from the mother country, the exploitation of the early Louisiana colony by Crozat, by John Law, the uncanny Scotch financier, and his Company of the Occident or of the Indies, and by others of lesser degree and authority, and more particularly the deep devotion and great love of Bienville to and for the budding colony, his spirit of perseverance in the midst of adversities and calamities of a most trying nature, are portrayed for the reader in most attractive and human fashion.

The regimes of de Perrier, of the magnificent Marquis de Vaudreuil, of the haughty and frigid Billouart de Kerlerrec, of the colorless d'Abbadie and of the double-faced Aubry, and the main events connected therewith are likewise presented to us in colorful prose and with an abundance of details of a human and interesting character.

The Spanish occupation is merely referred to because of the stubborn attitude of the colonists towards the new masters and their deep devotion to France, a country which at the time seemed to have lost all interest in her possessions across the

Atlantic. Much—and properly so—is made of the arrival of Pierre Clement de Laussat, Colonial Perfect and French High Commissioner, whose mission it was to preside at the retrocession ceremonies from Spain to France and twenty days subsequently from France to the United States of America.

Mrs. Hubert-Robert gives us information about the native Indian tribes of the Louisiana territory and province, their colorful customs, rituals and daily lives, unstintingly and with a profusion of images of a compelling and irresistible appeal. Nor does she neglect the fauna and flora of the old province, from the sources of the Mississippi to its outlet in the Gulf. Mrs. Hubert-Robert is not only a writer and a historian; she is a verbal painter of great skill. Metaphorically I would compare her brush to that of Puvis de Chavannes, the master of delicate tints and pastel blendings.

This history of French Louisiana is valuable not merely because of its subject, conscientiously and accurately dealt with, but also because it is a work of great literary merit.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED  
BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933, of The  
Louisiana Historical Quarterly, published quarterly at New Orleans, Louisiana, for October  
1, 1944.

State of Louisiana, Parish of East Baton Rouge, ss.

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and Parish aforesaid, personally appeared Walter Prichard, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Editor of The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, to-wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, The Louisiana Historical Society, The Cabildo, New Orleans, La.; Editor, Walter Prichard, University Station, Baton Rouge, La.; Managing Editor, None; Business Managers, None.

2. That the owner is the Louisiana Historical Society, The Cabildo, New Orleans, La.

There are no stockholders. The officers are: Edward A. Parsons, President, New Orleans, La.; André Lafargue, First Vice-President, New Orleans, La.; Hugh M. Wilkinson, Third Vice-President, New Orleans, La.; William A. Read, Vice-President, Baton Rouge, La.; Charles A. McCoy, Vice-President, Lake Charles, La.; James E. Winston, Archivist, New Orleans, La.; William Boizelle, Recording Secretary, New Orleans, La.; Henry M. Gill, Corresponding Secretary, New Orleans, La.; Walter Prichard, Editor, Baton Rouge, La.; J. B. Donnes, Treasurer, New Orleans, La.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, officers, etc., contain the full list of such; also that the above two paragraphs contain statements embracing the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which the said publication is published, managed and controlled.

(Signed) WALTER PRICHARD, Editor.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 6th day of October, 1944.

(SEAL)

JULIUS E. KNIGHT, Notary Public.  
(My commission is for life).